

SOME RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
JEAN INGELow

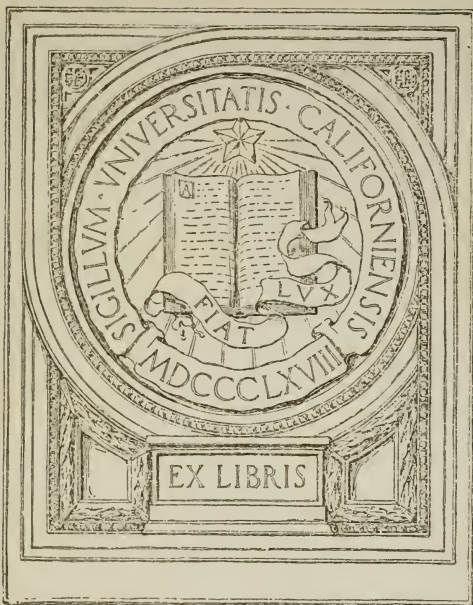
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JEAN INGELow









Photograph by Barraud

*Helen Inghelton*

SOME RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
JEAN INGELOW  
AND  
Her Early Friends

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CHAPTER I  
*EARLY GIRLHOOD*





## CHAPTER I

### EARLY GIRLHOOD

'When I sit on market-days amid the comers and the  
goers,

Oh, full oft I have a vision of the days without alloy ;  
And a ship comes up the river with a jolly gang of  
tow-ers,

And a pull 'e haul 'e, pull 'e haul 'e, yoy, heave hoy.

Then I hear the water washing—never golden waves  
were brighter—

And I hear the capstan creaking—'tis a sound that  
cannot cloy :

Bring her to, to ship her lading, brig or schooner, sloop  
or lighter,

With a pull 'e haul 'e, pull 'e haul 'e, yoy, heave hoy !

*Mopsa, the Fairy.*

It was to sounds like these that Jean Ingelow  
must have listened in her infancy and early  
childhood. The house where she was born, in  
Boston, Lincolnshire, looked with its nursery  
windows on to Boston River. Next to her

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father's house was the larger dwelling in which her grandparents lived with their only other child, a daughter. 'Auntie' she used to be called by Jean and the tribe of younger brothers and sisters. Here, also, she must have heard the chimes ringing from 'Boston Stump,' the finest parish church in England, with 'its lordly steeple,' whose lantern tower can be seen a distance of forty miles in the flat fen country. Many scenes described in her own story, 'Off the Skelligs,' represent, though with a difference, the early days of Jean and her brother next in age, George Kilgour, who was her constant companion. She also gives some incidents of her very early years in her chapters on the memory of children in *Longman's Magazine* for 1888.

Mrs. Fyvie Mayo, in an appreciative article contributed to the *Sunday at Home* of September, 1897, says that Jean came of well-bred, well-placed, well-to-do people. At the time of her birth in 1820 her grandfather Ingelow was a wealthy banker and ship-owner; hence the ships he owned coming up Boston River, which Jean

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and her little brother used to watch with such delight, with their 'jolly gangs of tow-ers.' Her cousin, Mr. Hollway, in an article published lately in a magazine, says of Jean's description of the child-life of the heroine of 'Off the Skelligs': 'If the book had been published anonymously, I never could have doubted, after reading the first few pages, who the author was. It brought back to me, too, glimpses from my own childhood with my Ingelow cousins in Boston. I had played with them (as the little people in the book played) on those banks between which Lindis "goeth, floweth"; had mounted with them the tower from whose belfry the chimes pealed forth the tune of "The Brides of Enderby" in the terrible time of the "stolen tyde"; and again, as I read, I could hear the swishing sound with which the wheat poured through the long deal funnels into the holds of the ships alongside the tall warehouses by the wharves.'

On her mother's side, Jean's ancestors had been Scotch gentlefolk for many generations, living on their own modest estates, and, like a

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

good many other Scotch folk, proud of their kith and kin and of their long descent. Though Jean's grandmother Kilgour was an English-woman, her children always called themselves Scotch people. Jean's great-grandfather Kilgour was blessed in the possession of twenty children, three small estates in Aberdeenshire, and a haunted house—Kilmundie was its name—and in this house the old patriarch lived with his wife and his twenty children and the ghosts.

In those days it was the custom for the family to have their meals at the upper end of the dining-hall, and the servants at the lower. In Scotland it was also then common for families to use peat for fuel, and in the raftered roof of Kilmundie House piles of these brick-shaped peats used to be stored.

At a certain hour in the evening (so saith the legend) the peats used to leave their rafters and begin flying from one end of the roof to the other. These antics on their part seem to have been followed by no tragic results, and, as far as I have heard, nobody tried to put a stop

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to them. But Scotch people in those days knew nothing about gas lamps in their halls, I suppose, much less of electric lights, and in the dimly lighted chambers a clever ghost could play a number of tricks without being found out. At any rate, the Kilmundie ghosts had it all their own way, and no wonder the house was said to be haunted, for nobody ever laid them.

George Kilgour, Jean's grandfather, being the youngest but one of the twenty children, was sent up to London to a merchant's office. He soon became comparatively rich, married young (his wife being a daughter of Mr. Thornborough, a man of good family in the North of England) and had twelve children—of whom the second married Mr. Ingelow, and was the mother of Jean Ingelow.

Jean's mother used to relate to her children little incidents of her own early childhood, one being that she was sometimes allowed to play in her mother's room when the maid dressed her mistress for dinner. It was then the fashion for quite young women to have their

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

hair cut short in order that they might wear whatever coloured wigs, or 'heads,' as they were called, might be considered most suitable for the dress chosen for the occasion. The little child playing on the floor remembered how the maid would say: 'Which head will you wear to-day, ma'am—your flaxen head or your auburn head?' and so on.

Jean's grandmother Kilgour died at the age of thirty-six, at the birth of her twelfth child, her husband at that time being about forty. He never married again, but continued to live on at his pleasant house at Highbury Grove, in the North of London, until after the marriage of his second daughter, Jean's mother. In those days Highbury was quite a country place, whose few villas and terraces were peopled by cultivated families. It was at Highbury that the Chapmans (father and son in succession members for Whitby), Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta, the Percevals, one of whom (when Prime Minister) was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons, and others, took up their abode about this time.

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And it was through Highbury fields, stretching away towards the City, that the Kilgour children, accompanied by their nurse and a favourite dog, used to wend their way once a week to Mark Lane to have early dinner with their aunt, Mrs. Barrett, whose husband's office was there. At that time it was not thought peculiar for men of business to live in the City, as may often be seen from Miss Austen's novels, notably the Gardners in 'Pride and Prejudice.' Sometimes, however, a wet day or some other cause kept the children from taking the long walk, but the dog never failed to start on the given day and at the right hour. Wet or dry, alone or in company, he used to make his way to Mark Lane, go to the right house, remain the usual time, and then trot back to Highbury Grove.

I have often heard Jean's mother speak of the 'Highbury Assemblies.' These were dances held once a fortnight, to which only the élite of the neighbourhood were allowed the entrée. To these assemblies it was that Jean Kilgour at the age of sixteen was wont to repair with



## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

her sister Sophia, aged eighteen (properly chaperoned, no doubt, for their mother had died in their childhood). They would be dressed, I dare say, in white satin, muslin, or gauze, as their tastes might dictate, cut low with embroidered bodices, with very short waists, very short sleeves, and very scanty skirts. We all know what the fashions of those days were by the illustrations in books of that period.

But before her marriage the religious convictions of Jean Kilgour had become much strengthened by her intimacy with Mrs. Stock, a sister of Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta. This lady was a strict Evangelical, and there is no doubt that the allegiance Jean's mother maintained during the whole of her subsequent life to that party in the Church was due to the influence Mrs. Stock exercised over her in her early youth.

The Miss Thornborough who lived in Mark Lane after her marriage with Mr. Barrett (the handsomest man I have ever seen) was the elder sister of Jean's grandmother, Mrs. Kilgour,



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and died, as did her sisters, Mrs. Kilgour and Mrs. Davies, in early middle age; but a fourth sister, who married a Captain Dobbinson, of the East India Company's navy, lived to be old. I recollect seeing her sometimes when I was a child, and noticing with awe and timidity her large mob-cap and her very evident false front, this last, with its triple row of tight brown curls, giving an air of fierceness to a countenance which perhaps belied her heart. The fate of Captain Dobbinson was mysterious. After his marriage he remained six weeks in England with his young bride; then he went to sea, returning at the end of a year and a half for another six weeks; then he sailed once more, and his wife never heard of him again. But what made the circumstance more tragic was that he had persuaded Mrs. Thornborough, his mother-in-law, to allow him to take her younger son, a lad of seventeen, as one of his midshipmen on that voyage from which neither ever returned. A portrait of the poor little middy when a pretty boy, with his hair long at the sides and cut square on the forehead, in

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

the fashion of the day, is in the possession of one of the family, and was, and is still, called 'the missing little uncle.'

This story, and many others about her family, used to be listened to with deep interest by Jean and her little brothers and sisters, for Mrs. Ingelow was graphic in her relations.

She used to tell them how, when she was settled as a bride in the Boston house, with its back to the river, she and Jean's father used to be expected on alternate days to dine with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ingelow, a grave but kindly pair, looking, let us hope, indulgently on their son's young wife in her short, very short, sleeves, her fair, uncovered shoulders, and her embroidered muslins and satins, with their gored scanty skirts, sufficiently short to give a glimpse of the white silk stockings and the sandalled shoes, displaying a very pretty foot and ankle.

There is a half-length portrait of Jean's mother taken three years after her marriage, when she was twenty-three. It represents a thoughtful but pretty woman. Her light hair

## Early Girlhood

is in short curls all round her head (it used to be called a crop), and she wears a white dress with the short waist then in vogue. That she was an accomplished and cultivated woman no one doubted, and her conversational powers were unusual. She used to say that she loved 'a two-handed crack' (Scottish for a conversation in which only two take part). Her range of thought was a large one, and her observation of character was acute; but where Jean got her poetic temperament it would be hard to say. Not from her witty, business-like father, and certainly not from her mother, who, though truly delighted to wake up one day to find her eldest child famous, and deeply appreciating the suffrages of the public, had no really poetic tendencies herself. She liked Cowper, but I really think more for the piety of his compositions than for any poetic merit they possessed. The little Ingelows had to learn from the 'Task' 'I Sing the Sofa,' and imbibed a genuine hatred for this poem. Reading 'Télémaque' in French was bad enough, they thought, but not so bad. It was Jean's brother

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

George who was so angry with 'Télémaque.' 'Hang this fellow! he's always blubbering!' He was very young when he gave expression to his sentiments in this daring and awful manner, but I believe the remark went without rebuke from his elders. There were hints of Jean as a healthy, docile little being, with her sympathetic heart and observant eyes, who trotted about the garden at Boston when hardly more than a baby, carrying stones in her pinafore from one place to another that they might be refreshed by a change of scene; or, again, so soon as she could be taken to church, amusing herself while there by finding better rhymes for some hymns which did not satisfy her ear, 'sticking in words that had no reference to the sense whatever.'

What, perhaps, was Jean's most striking characteristic in her early youth was her extreme conscientiousness. I think she availed herself of every educational advantage held out to her, whilst all the time she was educating herself in matters beyond the routine of an ordinary education; and yet how indulgent

## Early Girlhood

she was to her brothers and sisters ! I doubt whether she ever gave them advice ; she lived it all, for such as had the wit and wisdom to note it.

Anything like subterfuge or trickery she was incapable of. As she grew to early womanhood, a bashful gravity prevented her shining in society, and this bashfulness continued more or less through her whole life. She needed to be known to be beloved, and then how *much* was she beloved !

When Jean was about fourteen years of age her parents left Lincolnshire, and settled for a time at Ipswich, and it was there that the younger members of the family were born, there being more than one-and-twenty years between Jean and the youngest of the family. They lived in a fine old stone house, with the bank buildings attached, and there was a large walled garden at the back. Jean, being the eldest, was allowed a pretty two-windowed room looking into the garden for herself, and here it was, if I mistake not, that her poetic leaning was discovered by her mother, who, on

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

opening the white painted shutters one day to keep the room cool, found them, when unfolded, written all over with verses. After this unlucky day Jean could no longer hide her poems, and wrote on foolscap instead of shutters for the future.

I can see Jean now, pacing up and down the garden with her father, to whom she became an intelligent and delightful companion, entering into his thoughts and intellectual tastes as none of his younger children ever did. She was old for her years. At eighteen, and younger, she took the greatest interest in the serious talk of people old enough to be her parents.

There was one clergyman at Ipswich, the Rev. Robert Whytehead, whose friendship was of the greatest benefit to Jean. He had taken notice of her when she was in her early teens, and discovered at once that she had an unusually well-stored and original mind. Full of enthusiasm himself, Mr. Whytehead would discourse upon his favourite themes with all the ardour of his nature, and find a response in the young poetess. Mr. Whytehead, like Jean's

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parents, was a pronounced Evangelical. His wife, a delightful Scotchwoman, admired and believed what he admired and believed. The Ingelow children were excessively fond of Mrs. Whytehead, she was so pretty and so indulgent. Some time after the families became intimate, Mr. Whytehead, who was always zealous about missions, decided to go out to Africa as a missionary. I do not quite know to what dark spot of that dark continent he was bound, but the King's name was Dingaan, probably the Zulu chief of that name who was afterwards defeated in one of the wars of that part of the country many years ago, which event is still celebrated as a festival on its anniversary in the Orange Free State, and called 'Dingaan's Day.'

Much did Mr. Whytehead and his young friend Jean discourse on this benighted, bad, black heathen King, to whom sundry presents were to be given with the wisdom of the serpent, in the hope that his heart would be softened, and that the way would thus be opened to his becoming a Christian.



## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

Jean made a crown for Dingaan. I can see it now, and beautiful we thought it. It was made, with a cardboard foundation to keep it stiff, of scarlet velvet studded with numerous mock pearls, and composed of many sharp peaks. As the size of Dingaan's head was unknown, it was decided that the crown should be left open, and tied on at the back of the King's head with long streamers of blue satin ribbon. I forget whether Dingaan ever got that scarlet, jewel-studded crown which Mr. Whytehead was to have taken out to him; but the hope of becoming a missionary to the heathen had to be abandoned after all, though Mr. Whytehead's house was given up, and his wife and children prepared for the journey, because his health was considered to be too weak to endure the climate and the hardships incident on a missionary's life.

So far for Jean's childhood. When she grew up, like other imaginative and romantic girls, she had her dreams of love, and she had her lovers. I have seen more than one of these aspirants to her favour, and I think, though



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she never said so, that one handsome young sailor nearly won her heart. At the time he was trying to engage her affections, and possibly succeeding, they must both have been very young. If there ever was an engagement, it must have soon come to an end, for after that time, when he was staying for a short visit with Jean's parents, I do not remember ever seeing him again ; the romance ended as far as future intercourse was concerned.

' And did she love him ? what if she did not ?  
Then home was still the home of happiest years.  
\*            \*            \*            \*            \*  
But did she love him ? what and if she did ?'

But if she did love him or did not, I cannot say, for in all the intercourse I enjoyed with Jean in after years I think she never spoke of him ; and at the time of the little episode of my seeing them walking together, and he apparently urging his suit, I was but a child—amused, but too young to be sympathetic ; curious, but not interested.

Afterwards Jean had her full share of other

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

admirers, but I never heard of her having any preferences again.

There was an author of no mean literary standing who became attached to her when neither he nor she was young, but there was no answering feeling on her part. From her youth to mature age her wooers, all and sundry, were dismissed.

CHAPTER II

*FIRST FRIENDSHIPS*



## CHAPTER II

### FIRST FRIENDSHIPS

‘ Man dwells apart, though not alone ;  
He walks among his peers unread ;  
The best of thoughts which he hath known  
For want of listeners are not said.’

*Afternoon at a Parsonage.*

THESE lines aptly describe Jean's own life. She dwelt apart ; the ordinary life that most young people delight in, had few charms for her. Her chief joys were away and beyond all that. In recalling many scenes of my own youthful days in the company of her brothers and sisters, I can see her in but few of them. The follies and fancies which were bound up in our hearts as children and young people, seemed to have no hold upon her. One peculiarity of her character was that it was

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

absolutely straightforward. Her aims were exactly what they appeared to be. There was no *arrière pensée*; uprightness and sincerity walked side by side with her. Her extreme shyness gave her the appearance sometimes of being cold and proud, and her sincerity often made her seem brusque. I think she enjoyed intercourse with her elders, if they were intellectual or thoughtful, more than the sprightly fun of those of her own age. As her parents associated much with the clergy, it was the clergy and their wives whom she had for her friends, and they were generally very much her seniors. But, of course, there were exceptions, notably in the case of the Isaac Taylor family, of which two generations became her intimate friends. In that gifted family Isaac Taylor, senior, the author of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm" and other standard works, was her kind and appreciating friend, and with his daughters and his son, now Canon Isaac Taylor, author, among other valuable books, of 'Words and Places,' there sprung up an intimacy which was not soon to die out.

## First Friendships

The Taylors' house at Stanford Rivers was a delightful one to visit. The keenly intellectual father, the beautiful mother, the large family of young people, full of variety, yet much alike, in that one and all they were enthusiastic and romantic in their attachment to and admiration of their friends, formed a group at once unworldly and fascinating. In that house Jean must have found much that was congenial in both generations. Mrs. Taylor, without being, perhaps, more intelligent than many other cultivated women, had the art of throwing a halo over all her surroundings which I have never seen equalled—for I, too, 'have dwelt in Arcadia' when I was a visitor at Stanford Rivers. What the art was I know not, but *there* it was. One was made to feel, and that without an effort, that everything was touching and home-like and delightful; and yet the house was neither large nor handsome, the garden was not half so pretty as many one might see, the children were not all equally gifted or companionable, the amusements were few, and of gaieties there were none. Yet

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

when you sat on the couch behind a tiny table in the small drawing-room at the six o'clock tea, the family seated round the large table in the middle of the room—Jane, the eldest daughter, presiding at the urn, and you, the favoured guest, allowed to share the sofa with Mrs. Taylor; perhaps the youngest child, the little Euphemia, tucked into a corner of the said sofa, with its somewhat faded chintz cover—you felt that you were privileged beyond the ordinary run of mortals. I can see Mrs. Taylor now, in her pretty lilac-silk gown, and her dainty cap with its pink ribbons; the little table you shared with her, while some young member of the family handed you tea and muffins or bread and butter. All seemed to admire everything and everybody. But it was Mrs. Taylor who did it; it was *she* who cast the glamour over ordinary surroundings. Jean must have felt the charm, for with her, imagination ever held sway. Mr. Taylor held many delightful conversations with her. She liked to be questioned, and to gain help from the wisdom and experience of a



## First Friendships

man of unusual largeness and capacity of mind. Then the lovely walks to Epping Forest, Navestock, and Ongar were all within easy reach of Stanford Rivers. At breakfast Mr. Taylor would read extracts from some instructive book, and then (to the alarm of any young visitor who might not be carefully attending) would come to an abrupt pause, and ask his or her opinion of certain paragraphs.

Archdeacon Tattam was for some time Vicar of Stanford Rivers. He was a very kind friend to the poor old men in the parish, and one way in which he showed it was by bestowing his clerical coats and other garments upon them. At one time, I am told, three Archdeacons could be seen mending the roads, for they naturally wore the Vicar's comfortable garments when pursuing their daily avocations, without alteration, gaiters and all. That church with its narrow pews, I can see it now. 'So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.' It was a somewhat shabby little building then, and the pews occupied by the Taylor family were high and narrow. *Nous*

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

*avons changé tout cela !* Probably by this time there are open benches, a surpliced choir, and no Archdeacons who have seen better days mending the roads. *Sic transit !*

Jean was one of the few people who rather preferred the old style of church interior. Perhaps it made her think of her early days and the friends she loved then, seated in their long or square boxes, the old-fashioned galleries, the tuning of the violins, the voices of the men-singers half drowned by the shrill trebles of the Sunday-school children. In after years she expressed great delight with the old church at Whitby, on the Yorkshire coast, and fervently hoped the interior would not be meddled with. Truly, a modern architect would stand aghast when he entered that edifice, its gallery at the west end, but also its gallery over the middle of the nave, forming a kind of bridge ; then (for the information of those who have not visited it) yet *another* little gallery approached from a staircase outside ; then the pews square, long, and short, and of different heights, and up and down one or two steps, as the case might be.

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But Jean loved it, partly, I am sure, because she so greatly loved fisher-folk, and that Whitby Church had been pewed and galleried by the piety of the Whitby fishermen. But this is a digression.

The friendship with the family of Isaac Taylor began when they were quite young at Walton-on-the-Naze, in Essex, a seaside resort the Ingelows much loved as children, and after most of them had grown out of childhood. Long had they known of the Taylor family from having read 'Original Poems,' a work unspeakably charming to the young. Jane Taylor and her sister Ann (Mrs. Gilbert) must have thoroughly understood young people's tastes. Even to *learn* 'The Cow and the Ass' was a pastime. 'Greedy Dick' and 'Mrs. Duck,' on whose tombstone was put 'Here lies Mrs. Duck, the notorious glutton,' to say nothing of the unfortunate spider slain by a gentleman, 'not stopping at all to consider,' before

'With one horrid crash the whole business was o'er,  
And the poor little spider was heard of no more,  
To the lasting distress of his widow.'

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

The little Ingelows pronounced it *widder* to make the rhyme perfect. These, I say (and many more of the 'Original Poems'), were as familiar in their mouths as household words.

Anyone who has not read the 'Autobiography of Mrs. Gilbert' had better get it at once; most fascinating is it from its quaint, clever simplicity.

I do not think Jean was at Walton-on-the-Naze when Mrs. Taylor called on 'Auntie,' but if not, then she soon after became intimate with the whole family, and the happy intercourse and interchange of visits formed pleasant episodes in the simple lives led by these young people. Afterwards other claims shut out in a measure the intimacy between the Taylors and the Ingelows. Some of each family married, some were scattered to the four corners of the earth, but the recollection of that early friendship always remained with them, and though interrupted, it has never been lost.

Jean's early training exercised a great influence over her through life, but especially in

## First Friendships

her early grown-up days. She had been brought up in what would be called the strictest school of the Evangelicals, the school of Charles Simeon, Legh Richmond, Cecil, etc.—a school which in fact, I suppose, has almost passed away. Jean's mother never had any of her children taught dancing, never allowed them to go to the theatre or balls or races, or to any amusement which she considered worldly. 'Giving up the world' was taught her by Mrs. Stock, Bishop Wilson's sister. Balls, the theatre, card-parties, dress, if at all fashionable or costly, must be given up if you would give up 'the world.' Though Jean's mother was only a girl of sixteen when her friendship with Mrs. Stock began, and though, I believe, she still frequented the 'Highbury Assemblies,' which were wholly for dancing, until her early marriage, her views became stricter as time went on. And of her children there is little doubt that in early manhood or womanhood, the one who most followed and adhered to the mother's religious tendencies was Jean. Her mind seemed always reverent

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

and devout, and the sober gravity of her mother's most intimate associates was probably far from distasteful to her thoughtful and serious nature. But Jean had, notwithstanding, a keen sense of fun, and saw the little strainings at gnats which even some of the elders she loved best indulged in. One day Jean came home after an interview with her favourite Mrs. Whytehead. Jean was wearing a very pretty new bonnet on the occasion in question (very quiet-looking, though, no doubt)—

‘Ah, Jean,’ said Mrs. Whytehead, ‘I see a little artificial flower.’

Probably someone had intimated to this delightful woman that artificial flowers were worldly. Be that as it may, Jean laughed heartily in telling the anecdote, but she did *not* take the little flower out of her bonnet. Perhaps she was about eighteen years of age at that time and very nice looking. She had a fine colour, dark soft hair, and remarkably bright hazel-gray eyes. She was rather short, and on the whole her appearance was decidedly attractive. I think when she first grew up

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Jean must have found it somewhat dreary pleasure accompanying her mother and 'Auntie' (Mr. Ingelow never could be induced to go with them) to the tea-parties, where she must have sat in abashed silence, while her elders (chiefly clergymen and their wives) discoursed on some religious or missionary topic. She would be too shy to speak unless spoken to, and would, I think, be glad when the so-called pleasure was over. These parties always began at about seven o'clock with tea and coffee, etc., handed round, and they ended with supper and prayers. When they were at the Ingelows' house, those of Jean's brothers and sisters who had grown out of the nursery were allowed to be present for that part of the evening *after* tea and *before* supper. I dare say they looked a little rueful when told to retire before the jellies and sandwiches appeared, for the suppers were not substantial on those occasions. Still, while the somewhat formal circle of invited guests discoursed together before the refreshments were announced, the children generally contrived some amusement for them-



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selves, seated, as they used to be, round the table near the drawing-room window ; for they could tell each other (the little girls, I mean) which of the clergymen's wives had the prettiest dress when they had left the charmed circle, and the boys could make notes of what was said, and if any voice struck them as being peculiar, they could imitate it afterwards. That lofty, gray-panelled drawing-room, with its high mantelpiece carved in relief with apples and other fruits, all painted white and surmounted with white marble, the large sofa against the wall covered with white flowered chintz, as were the rosewood chairs, the very tall piano with its fluted silk front, the high fireplace, the gray and white doors—how cold it always looked ! Even when lighted up with numerous wax candles and with a large fire in the high old-fashioned grate, it failed to give one an idea of cosiness, and even in sunny summer, the long white wall which hid the kitchen and laundry offices was too near the window—as was an immense elm-tree, which partly hid the garden—to allow of the room



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being cheerful. The dining-room, on the contrary, whose great bow-window opened on to the garden, was delightful. There you had a full view of the big lawn, the long grass walk, and the beautiful old trees. That garden was a source of never-failing enjoyment. I have often seen Jean pacing up and down one of her favourite walks in it; perhaps she was meditating on some poems which she afterwards wrote down. I have heard her say that sometimes a poem would come to her when she was in bed, and she would speedily get up and light her candle to write it down, lest she should forget it when she awoke in the morning.

There used to be periodical meetings at the Town Hall at Ipswich for the Church Missionary Society; I think they were held once in two months. The Ingelows always went; this was a treat to the younger ones. I don't think they wanted to hear anything about missions, but they sat up later when they went to the meetings, and that in itself was a pleasure. Jean probably at that time was the

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

only one of the family who took a real interest in missions, but her favourite society was that for promoting Christianity among the Jews.

She had, in addition to the bedroom to herself before mentioned, a tiny sitting-room upstairs, large enough for a table and two or three chairs—a kind of prophet's chamber, in fact. Here it was that she used to work for the Jews' Society with great diligence and zeal when very young, and here it was that her younger sisters were sometimes admitted, not to work, I am afraid, but to look on admiringly while her busy fingers made pretty things to be sold for this her pet society.

Mrs. Ingelow used to send round a Church Missionary Basket twice a year, to the plenishing of which she and her neighbours used to contribute. I remember the Missionary Basket used to be carried out by a very stout, comfortable-looking, red-cheeked woman, who was paid a shilling in the pound for what she sold. There were some worked chair-covers sent by four cousins of Mrs. Ingelow's, grand-daughters of the old patriarch of the haunted house.

## First Friendships

Year after year these chair-covers went round in the Missionary Basket, and year after year the price had to be reduced; but I fear they never sold, and I wonder where those six chair-covers are now! A small, a very small, group of flowers worked in Berlin wool adorned the centre of each stone-coloured moreen cover. They were ugly, sadly ugly, but what pains those good Scotch ladies must have taken with them! Many years afterwards, when Mrs. Ingelow was once staying in Sussex, she called on her cousin, the one surviving Miss Kilgour. Even then, though past seventy-three, she was still a beautiful woman, and had retained the lovely complexion and graceful dignity of carriage which seldom survive to that age.

The four sisters had lived for many years in Uckfield Manor House, but when Mrs. Ingelow called only this lady of the four was still living.

I hope if Miss Kilgour looked down the vista of years, when those covers were first sent to gyrate over the length and breadth

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

of Ipswich and its environs, she saw them all sold at the high price she and her sisters had put on them.

I have said that the missionary *meetings* were a pleasure, and certainly an amusement, to the little Ingelows, but the missionary *box* they scarcely looked upon in the light of a pleasure; nevertheless, they frequently contributed towards its being filled, a fine of one halfpenny being invariably exacted of anyone late for prayers. Though the fine was always paid most unwillingly, and consequently that portion of the Society's work which comprised the missionary box was not very popular, I do not think it ever made them feel a grudge against the Society as a whole. On the contrary, I am glad to know that as some of the family grew up, missions became dear for a better reason than because going to the meeting at the Town Hall not only involved the sitting up late, but gave besides the opportunity of telegraphing to any young friends who might be seated in neighbouring benches, when they found the speakers dull or too lengthy.

## CHAPTER III

*'AUNTIE'*



## CHAPTER III

### ‘ AUNTIE ’

‘ Still the old tale, but they are children yet ;  
O let their mothers have them while they may !  
Soon it shall work, the strange mysterious fret  
That mars both toil and play.

“ Father, dear father, bid us now God-speed ;  
We cannot choose but sail ; it thus befell.”

“ Mother, dear mother——”

“ Nay, ’tis all decreed.

Dear hearts, farewell ! farewell !”

*Kismet.*

IN speaking of Jean’s very early youth, I conclude that, like her younger brothers and sisters, she came under the influence of ‘ Auntie ’—Mr. Ingelow’s only sister, and some years his senior. After the death of her parents ‘ Auntie ’ lived in a house of her own at Skirbeck, near Boston ; but when Jean’s father and mother, with their children, left Lincolnshire, she went with them, and from that time lived in her brother’s house until her death.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

‘Auntie’ was a very dignified and grave person; moreover, with a fine presence, very upright in carriage, and moving slowly. When entering a room to receive visitors, she made a slight curtsy at the door before coming forward to greet them.

She had been one of the eight pupils of Miss Linwood, a lady celebrated in her day as having re-introduced and brought almost to perfection the art of crewel-work, animals, figures and flowers being exquisitely embroidered by her. And her pupils, in addition to being ‘finished,’ as it was called, in other ‘elegant accomplishments,’ were instructed in this beautiful art.

In the dining-room of the house at Kensington in which Jean Ingelow last lived, hang two pictures, worked in crewels, of dead game, beautiful and valuable if they had been painted, but wonderful as specimens of needlework. And these were the work of ‘Auntie’ when finishing her education in London at Miss Linwood’s.

Two of her fellow-pupils of whom she some-



## ‘ Auntie ’

times spoke were the Misses Rogers, beautiful girls of good family in Lincolnshire, both of whom died young. ‘ Auntie ’ used to wear some of their hair in a ring, which ring Jean always wore after her aunt’s death.

Other fellow-pupils of ‘ Auntie’s ’ were the daughters of an Irish nobleman. These young ladies probably considered that education, once finished, had better be done away with finally. ‘ Auntie ’ awed, but also amused, her little nieces by occasionally describing some of their proceedings when she went to stay with them. On a wet day they would take the largest drawers out of the wardrobes, place them at the head of the staircase with one or two reckless inmates, and then send the drawers flying down to the bottom. ‘ Auntie,’ who must have been sedate from her cradle, would surely never have consented to the perilous passage downstairs. Still less would she have approved when, on a certain Sunday morning, the banns of a young lady and a gentleman staying in the house were given out in church by the all-unconscious clergyman, to their

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

extreme indignation and discomfiture. This was certainly carrying a frolic too far, and I am sure Miss Linwood, had she seen her young friends on the Saturday when they were sending off the 'banns,' would have been far better pleased had they been seated at their embroidery frames, working a shepherdess surrounded by her lambs, or sorting their crewels to find the colours she had told them were the best for the birds and flowers they were choosing as their next effort in needlework.

'Auntie' undertook to teach the small Ingelows by turns as they grew old enough to learn reading and easy sums, etc., before they were promoted to the dignity of being handed over to their mother for more advanced studies.

A little funnel-shaped paper-bag used to be seen on the table by 'Auntie's' workbox, and into this receptacle she would pour a small number of sugar-plums when lessons and conduct had been satisfactory, and present it to her tiny pupil.

'Auntie' was good to all her nephews and nieces, but two among them claimed the

## ‘ Auntie ’

largest share of her affections—Jean and one of the younger little boys. Jean was undoubtedly much beloved by her grave and somewhat silent aunt.

A great friend of ‘ Auntie’s ’ was a lady of the name of Thirkill—Miss Susan Thirkill—who, when the Ingelow family emigrated to Ipswich, left her Lincolnshire home to be near them.

Miss Thirkill was a semi-invalid, much troubled with indigestion, who took many supposed remedies for this complaint, chiefly pills, I think, for the empty pill-boxes (pink ones, which made them peculiarly attractive) used to be given by her in rotation to the smaller boys and girls, much to their delight. ‘ Is it Johnny’s turn, or Willie’s, to have the pill-box to-day ? ’ the good lady would placidly inquire, drawing the desirable treasure from her ‘ reticule ’ as she spoke. What various uses the little boxes were put to deponent sayeth not ; perhaps the ‘ reward of merit ’ sugar-plums were deposited therein.

Miss Thirkill was distantly related to the

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

late Professor John Conington, of Oxford celebrity.

One day 'Susan' announced that she was going to be married. I did hear that 'Auntie' was so much shocked and distressed at her friend's idea of taking such a tremendously injudicious step in middle-age that she did all in her power to dissuade her. 'Susan,' however, was quite determined; she said that she and Mr. Lowe (the bridegroom-elect, aged fifty-nine) had made up their minds 'to put their pots and kettles together' (that was her expressive, if unromantic, phrase, both having a little house of their own), and that they felt it would be for their mutual happiness. 'Auntie' could prevail nothing; she was no friend to matrimony, and didn't see why 'Susan' could not let well alone. Mrs. Ingelow, however, took a very cheerful view of the subject, and promised to give the wedding breakfast, and, what was much kinder, would not allow one of her laughing boys or girls to go to the church to see Miss Thirkill married to her elderly lover. Jean, who was

## ‘ Auntie ’

grown up by that time, was, however, present at the breakfast, and wore a pretty white India muslin gown, profusely embroidered. A large, sedate party sat down to the breakfast; but while the expected wedding-guests were at the church, the Ingelow children had the delight of skipping round the table to look at all the appetising dishes their mother had provided, and to wish they could have a taste.

The wedding ceremony was performed by an excellent clergyman, Mr. Nottidge, a friend of Charles Simeon's.

I believe the marriage was a happy one, but ‘ Auntie ’ never got reconciled to it.

Mrs. Ingelow was a great advocate of home education. Her sons never left the home roof during the years they were having their schooling, but were taught by various schoolmasters (always clergymen), and slept and had their meals at home. The daughters were educated at home by their mother, with the help of masters, and at some of these lessons the sons were also present.

At one time, when Jean was perhaps seven-

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

teen or eighteen years of age, a Monsieur de St. Félix was engaged to give lessons in French to the elder young people, to which the younger boys and girls were admitted. They used to assemble once or twice a week, after the late dinner, in the drawing-room, and seated round a good-sized table drawn into the middle of the room, exercise-books before them, were supposed to listen attentively to the remarks and instructions of Monsieur, while Mrs. Ingelow, seated near, presided.

Monsieur was a great talker. He used first to dictate a lesson for his pupils to write down, and after this was over, there followed what his younger pupils would have considered a *mauvais quart d'heure*, but that the more daring found for themselves an occupation to beguile the time.

Monsieur, in order to give his pupils fluency in colloquial French, used to set himself to converse in that language with any of them who could follow his rapid utterances. No doubt Jean really conscientiously tried to benefit by these 'conversations,' as they were called, but

## ‘Auntie’

they almost resolved themselves into a duet between Monsieur and Mrs. Ingelow, who, although able to talk fluently, always spoke very English-French. Meantime the younger members of the class would arrange their exercise-books into a kind of screen by standing them upright, for Monsieur sat at some distance from the round table. Behind these screens small bonfires used to be made with tiny bits of paper placed on shabby books and set alight, causing a fearful joy to the incendiaries; for there was always the risk of the flames rising above the improvised screens, or of some harm coming to the tablecloth.

But before this time Jean had begun to write, though I cannot say exactly at what age—probably quite in childhood, though she was in her early teens when she began to write poems on the shutters. I remember thinking her very first lines written at an early age grand. They were supposed to be addressed by Katherine of Arragon to Henry VIII. before he divorced her; and before they were, with other of her youthful poetical efforts, collected



## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

and published, years after, in the 'Rhyming Chronicle,' they were printed in a small newspaper got up and printed by some of her brother's fellow-pupils and himself. This little paper, which during its short life came out weekly, and of which the price was one penny, was called the *St. Stephen's Herald*. The type was set up by the pupils themselves, and a good part of the literature, which was of an exceedingly youthful description, and for the most part only interesting to the admiring relatives of the writers, was supplied, I think, chiefly by the Ingelow family, Jean's articles even then, however, being often worth reading.

In a short notice of Jean Ingelow written in 1897 a few weeks after her death, by her cousin John George Hollway, he makes mention of the *St. Stephen's Herald* thus :

'Jean Ingelow was a writer from a child, but though her compositions began early her publishing did not. Still, if she was not early published, she was early printed. Not long ago I met at her table a distinguished soldier and administrator, Major-General Sir Francis Nor-



## ‘ Auntie ’

man, and it was pleasant to hear him recalling his old schoolboy days, when he made one of a merry, clever group of young people of which Jean Ingelow and her brothers and sisters were also members.

‘ This society had an organ, a literary organ, which was called, after a collegiate school which the boys then attended, the *St. Stephen’s Herald*. This was not only written, but set up in type, by themselves, the actual printer being, I believe, Sir Francis Norman. . . .

‘ Of her own contributions Miss Ingelow wrote me: “ My contributions to the *Herald* (I wrote under the name of Orris) were all highly moral and very tragical, and it was only when none of us could do anything droll that my poems were put in to fill up.” ’

The little *Herald* soon died a natural death, of course, being conducted by a few boys and girls who only cared for it for the short time it was a novelty to appear in print. Such small publications generally come to a speedy collapse, and I only mention the *St. Stephen’s Herald* because in it Jean first appeared in print.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

From this time, after the family left Suffolk and settled near London (first at Streatham Park Road), I am not aware that Jean wrote at all for some two or three years, excepting, for her own pleasure, a few stories and poems in manuscript. It was after the Ingelows emigrated to a street leading out of the New Road in London, for the sake principally of the youngest brother, who was a pupil at King's College School, that the *Rhyming Chronicle* was published, by the advice and with the help of her friend the Rev. Edward Harston, Vicar of Tamworth, upon the death of whose three children Jean had written some pathetic verses. After that, for several years, Jean was a contributor to the *Youth's Magazine*, as will be seen further on, and she became a member of a literary society called 'The Portfolio.' It was to this society, the members of which met once a month, that Jean contributed, among other poems, 'Persephone' which afterwards appeared in the volume which was published in 1863.

Adelaide Procter, Charles Calverley, and

## ‘ Auntie ’

others also contributed to the ‘Portfolio,’ Mr. J. G. Hollway being reader. Many of the papers were exceedingly good, and most of the members of the society must have regretted its coming to an end—owing, I believe, to some misunderstanding as to its rules.

One of the poems written for the Portfolio Society was taken home by Mrs. Procter to her daughter Adelaide. ‘I see now who will be my successor,’ said Miss Procter, who was then lying on her death-bed. This ‘new note’ enchanted her, perhaps heard then for the first time.

Of Jean’s early childhood I have heard but little; but my own first recollection of her must have been when she was twelve years old, and the possessor of an olive-coloured cloak, which she was wearing one winter day out walking on the Skirbeck Road near Boston, and I, a small child, complacently trotting by her side, completely hidden, little feet excepted, under its voluminous folds. The effect must have been droll to the passers-by, but there is no doubt that Jean was exceedingly proud of

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

this garment, the gift of one of her young aunts, and of the newest London fashion.

There is a sweet pastel half-length portrait of Jean in the house at Kensington where she lived with her two brothers. It represents her as a baby, perhaps of about eighteen months. She wears a cap with a lace border, set with many narrow white satin bows. The embroidered white frock, very short in the waist, shows the fair little arms and shoulders, and the baby's chubby hands hold a rosy-cheeked apple, but the bright blue eyes are looking at *you*, and not at the apple. There is a bright colour in the cheeks, and this colour Jean retained during the greater part of her life; it gave a look of animation and health to her intellectual countenance.

Jean's extreme love of watching the habits of birds, and her delight in these 'winged wayfarers,' must have been a taste inherited from her father. I have seen Mr. Ingelow sometimes with a child on each knee rapturously listening while he whistled like a blackbird or a robin till you might have fancied the bird itself

## ‘ Auntie ’

was in the room. In after life Jean was pleased always to recall her familiarity with birds from her childhood. She was an excellent nest-finder, which she frequently indulged in when walking about in her friends' gardens. When a child she had delighted in a brood of young (deserted ?) linnets, which the little Ingelows ‘brought up by hand’ in their father's garden. She told me that they had made observations for themselves on the ways of birds, and found out that the inexperienced young ones, just beginning housekeeping, sometimes made mistakes in building their first nest, which *the parents came and set right for them !*

The musical gifts of both parents descended to several of their children. One of Jean's younger sisters, who died several years before her, had so sweet a soprano voice and pronounced her words so perfectly that people would be moved to tears when she sang a plaintive ballad. I have often heard her at private concerts in Staffordshire, where her husband had a living. Though Jean in early youth had a fine voice, she was not particularly

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

fond of music, and sometimes even regretted that it put a stop to conversation. Considering the wonderful music of some of her ballads, and the pleasure that composers used to have in setting them to music, this was singular.

‘O Fair Dove,’ set to music by her friend Alfred Gatty, was sung in thousands of drawing-rooms. A London leader, commenting on the wearisome iteration of this particular song, exclaimed: ‘Oh, that someone would wring that pigeon’s neck!’

Virginia Gabriel’s music for the song ‘When Sparrows Build’ was very beautiful, but being more elaborate, was not so much hackneyed, for any would-be songstress, whether she could or not (and generally she could *not*), fancied herself equal to singing ‘O Fair Dove’; and I, alas! have suffered much in hearing that lovely setting to lovelier words murdered by more than one good woman who did not know her vocation.

I think the first time Jean met Robert Browning was at a musical party at Virginia

## ‘ Auntie ’

Gabriel's. The acquaintance thus begun never ripened into an intimacy, though Jean was a great admirer of his genius.

As regards her friendships and partialities, beyond and apart from the members of her own family, I should say that Jean had but few, considering the many who sought her acquaintance and desired to be on intimate and confidential terms with her. She loved the whole human race, and wrote for it, worked for it, and served it all her life; but hers, I think, was not a mind which could unfold itself to many. A few friends she loved much, a few more she felt grateful to for their love for her, but I doubt whether her gratitude went out to those who simply sought her for her genius. I may be mistaken, but such is my impression. The people she loved, too, were not necessarily those who had been brought up in her school of religious thought, or whose literary tastes ran in the same groove with her own. Her few warm friendships were with people of widely different views from her own and from each other, but they were people who in their



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own line took a high place. But I think the circle of chosen friends was a limited one. Her love was bestowed upon her fellow-creatures in the mass, I think, more than on the individual. I am speaking now of those outside her own family and near relatives, for who could be a more loving, dutiful, and devoted daughter, or a more helpful, affectionate sister?

Tell her of hungry invalids needing nourishing food, she delighted in helping them; tell her of good agencies languishing for want of funds, how gladly would she open her purse! tell her of orphans left friendless and desolate, more than one did she maintain and have educated and brought out in the world.

But the time would fail me to recount all her charities 'out of a pure heart and love unfeigned' for the fellow-creatures she helped because they *were* her fellow-creatures. Especially, too, did her heart go out to children generally; she thought them so near to God. As in some beautiful valedictory lines addressed to a young girl, of whom some had said, watch-



## ‘ Auntie ’

ing the opening bud, ‘ More fair than morn shall prove the day,’ she exclaims :

‘ Sweet souls, so nigh to God who rest,  
How shall be bettering of your best ?’

In this case she loved the individual child, but usually it was *childhood* rather than any particular child that her sympathies and love went out to.

Dear friend, how sweet was your love and friendship to me ! How deep your sympathy in my griefs ! How tender and loving your counsels in my perplexities ! Alas ! that your voice is heard no more on this side the veil. I say ‘ Alas ! ’ but rather should I thank God that I was once among the few you deeply loved.



CHAPTER IV  
*LIFE IN LONDON*



## CHAPTER IV

### LIFE IN LONDON

‘ Learn that if to thee the meaning  
Of all other eyes be shown,  
Fewer eyes can ever front thee  
That are skilled to read thine own,  
And that, if thy love’s deep current  
Many another’s far outflows,  
Then thy heart must take for ever  
Less than it bestows.’

*A Mother showing Portrait of  
her Child.*

THE *Youth’s Magazine*, now incorporated with the *Bible Class Magazine*, was formerly published separately, Dr. Whittemore, then Rector of St. Catharine Cree, and the originator of the Church Flower Services, now so popular, being for some years editor of the little periodical, which came out once a month at the time Jean Ingelow first began to contribute to its pages.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

Its tendency was semi-religious and Evangelical.

The Isaac Taylors took it up at that time, which was many years ago, and perhaps mentioned it to Jean. Be this as it may, one day Jean and some of her young brothers and sisters suddenly decided that they would all send contributions, and see whose would be put in. Accordingly, one particular month short articles poured in to the editor from Jean, a brother—I think two of her sisters—Isaac Taylor, junior, already a contributor, and a young Cambridge undergraduate, a friend of the Ingelows. I think all were put in at once, Jean taking the *nom de plume* of 'Orris.' Proud and happy and intensely amused were the younger members of the family to see themselves in print and with different signatures. I remember that Isaac Taylor's initials were 'S. X.,' Jean's brother signed himself 'U. Z.,' and the Cambridge man 'T. Y.' I do not remember the names taken by the others. To Jean only of the Ingelow contributors came the welcome words: 'We shall be glad to hear again from

## Life in London

“Orris.” After this ‘Orris’ frequently sent contributions, and was paid a small sum for each. Years afterwards, when she became famous, these pretty stories were collected and reprinted as ‘Studies for Stories,’ ‘Stories Told to a Child,’ and ‘A Sister’s Bye-Hours.’ Some years after Jean had become a contributor to the *Youth’s Magazine* she was asked to edit it, and she did so for one year, but no longer, on account of the difficulty of supplying a sufficient number of articles to fill it. I think it was when Dr. Whittemore gave it up that Jean became the editor. Dr. Whittemore’s predecessor could not have had a very keen sense of humour, or he would scarcely have inserted the contribution sent by ‘U. Z.’ when the Ingelows first wrote for the magazine. I remember little of it, but it was an allegory about a number of sheep browsing in some verdant pastures, supposed to represent the Church of England; but in order to encourage good Nonconformists, the allegory went on to point out some more well-disposed animals, also sheep, but perhaps not quite so

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

judicious in their selection of a field, of which 'U. Z.' remarks: 'The grass, though equally *wholesome*, was of an inferior quality and flavour.' If the allegory was meant to be serious—and I believe it was—it failed in its aim, for it was really quite unspeakably funny; but, as I said before, it went in, as did Tennyson's stanzas, 'Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,' which another of the party copied straight off from 'In Memoriam,' and sent with cheerful audacity, without asking permission of the author. Of Jean's contributions to this magazine Mrs. Fyvie Mayo remarks: 'Under the name of "Orris" she went on writing for years, her beautiful work, the very same which was afterwards so highly appreciated, not winning the slightest notice in the little periodical in which it first appeared, and at which reviewers apparently did not think it worth while to glance.'" The earliest poem which I can discover in the little magazine appeared there in 1852. This poem is the exquisite 'Chantrey's Snowdrops,' and was



## Life in London

first published in the 'Rhyming Chronicle,' of which mention is made later.

To quote further from Mrs. Mayo's beautiful tribute to Jean's character and talents, she says: 'To each life comes its own burden. But hers was a nature that, instead of filling heaven and earth with musical bewailings for whatever might be its share of the common lot, took up its place bravely in the ranks of common endurance and common victory. . . . We venture to quote one verse of hers which seems to give the key to her cheerful philosophy of life. Its suggestion is that, while our conscious efforts to do great things or good things so often end in piteous failure or disappointment, yet God gives our existence its due value and purpose in ways of which we do not dream, and possibly just because we cannot dream them:

'One launched a ship, but she was wrecked at sea ;  
He built a bridge, but floods have borne it down ;  
He meant much good ; none came, strange destiny !  
His corn lies sunk ; his bridge bears none to town,  
Yet good he had not meant became his crown,  
For once, at work, when even as Nature free  
From thought of good he was, or of renown,  
God took the work for good, and let good be.'

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

‘It was not till after 1860,’ continues Mrs. Mayo, ‘that the issue of a certain volume of collected poems brought out enthusiastic praise from another poet writing in the *Athenæum*, whereupon a general chorus of applause was heard. The poems selected for special encomium were “Divided” and “The High Tide.” Then it was discovered that Jean Ingelow had also written prose, and in the sudden demand for her work the stories which had appeared in the little magazine were brought forward. She had written them for mere pleasure, with so little thought of future fame or profit, that she herself had no copies of them. One who had appreciated her for years, brought out the old magazines, which had been treasured for the sake of her pages therein, and in her interests the beloved volumes were gladly sacrificed that her work might appear in better form.’

But long before the publication of ‘Poems by Jean Ingelow’ in 1863, she had published, as is mentioned in another place, the modest volume of poems entitled ‘A Rhyming

## Life in London

Chronicle.' This never reached, I believe, a second edition, yet it had its admirers, and among them an author of no less note than Alfred Tennyson, who, though remarking upon some inaccuracy of rhyme, etc., considered the work, as a whole, showed great promise, and in a note to a cousin of Jean Ingelow's (Miss Hollway) expressed a wish to become acquainted with the young poetess. During many years Jean enjoyed the friendship, and had occasional pleasant interviews with, the late Poet Laureate. It was after her book appeared in 1863, which, as we have before observed, was the beginning of her popularity, that Lord Tennyson meeting her, laughingly exclaimed :

' I declare, you do the trick better than I do !'

Possibly the kindly reception Jean always met with at his hands may have been partly due to her having been of his own county, Lincolnshire. Be this as it may, the friendly regard of so celebrated a man must have been a great encouragement to a timid young author at a time when, a few personal friends

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

excepted, no one took the slightest notice of her writings. Afterwards, when fame was suddenly accorded her, many other celebrated men of letters desired to show their admiration of her genius ; but Alfred Tennyson spontaneously owned her talent long before, and I think that must have always been a pleasure to her.

For more than thirty years Jean was the intimate friend and correspondent of Mr. Ruskin, who spoke of her in a number of his 'Fors Clavigera' as one of the few he loved.

Her friendship with Sir Arthur Helps until his lamented death was also of great service to her. Jean, in addition to enjoying the personal regard of many famous men and women, corresponded with Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Dora Greenwell, and many others. Calverley was notoriously an admirer of her poetry, though, in common with Tennyson, Robert Browning, and others, she was cleverly parodied by him in his 'Fly Leaves.' With Sir Reginald Palgrave and with the late Mr. Francis Palgrave—notably with the former—

## Life in London

there was also pleasant intercourse, and Jean was for years on affectionate terms with her distant cousin Mrs. (L. B.) Walford, and with 'Claribel,' Mrs. Carey Barnard.

With the present Dean of Canterbury, and with his brother, Henry Farrar, the Ingelow family had been acquainted from the early youth of both families. Henry Farrar died in the prime of life. He was a great favourite with the whole Ingelow family, his vivacity and wit, coupled with a most genial nature, making him an especially delightful companion.

Jean also enjoyed the society of some of the noted painters of the day, among them Mr. Alfred Hunt, whose wife and daughter both became authors; and with the late E. W. Cooke and his mother and sisters a most pleasant intercourse was long kept up. Mr. Cooke, after the death of his young wife, went back to live with his mother at Kensington, bringing his two motherless boys with him. Years after the Ingelows became acquainted with this interesting family, Mr. Cooke built a fine house near Groombridge in Sussex, with

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

a wonderful garden and hot-houses. It was there that I once saw him. His mother was still living, at the age of ninety-three, in the possession of all her faculties, and *making her own caps*. I remember on that occasion she was wearing a very smart one, trimmed profusely with lilac ribbons, her youngest daughter saying with great pride :

‘ Mamma always makes her own caps.’

Mr. Cooke related with keen satisfaction how, coming up one day to his own hall-door dressed, as was his wont, in a suit of brown holland, he found standing by it an empty carriage, of which he rightly conjectured the owners were seated in his drawing-room with some of the family. The coachman and footman, seeing the stranger, kindly entered into conversation with him, and the footman, after a few general remarks, said confidentially :

‘ I say, they say your master’s a queer un.’

Mr. Cooke, highly amused, took care to preserve his incognito, but the footman must have felt that his confidences had been somewhat misplaced, when presently, the visitors coming

## Life in London

out of the house, Mr. Cooke stepped up to them and, shaking hands, placed them in the carriage.

The late Charles Keene, for thirty years one of the most admired artists of *Punch*, was well known to Jean Ingelow from his youth, having shared some chambers with her eldest brother when they were both very young men. Mr. Layard, in his interesting memoir of Charles Keene, mentions this circumstance, and inserts a letter from Jean Ingelow, containing some pleasant remarks on the kindly disposition of the great artist.





CHAPTER V  
*SOME OF HER CHARITIES*



## CHAPTER V

### SOME OF HER CHARITIES

‘Are there no briars across Thy pathway thrust?  
Are there no thorns that compass it about,  
Nor any stones that Thou wilt deign to trust  
My hands to gather out?’

*Honours.*

THE greater part of her life after she grew up Jean Ingelow lived in Kensington—first, for about twenty years, in Holland Street, in a tall, rather ugly house, but containing several good rooms, and leading from steps out of the long dining-room into a pretty, small garden, which opened into another, larger, with lawn in the middle, and a gravel-walk round, and enclosed with a rather high wall, down one side of which was a row of lime-trees. It was during the years the family lived in

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

Holland Street that the greater part of Jean's books were published, and that she was most popular.

It was the time, too, when her life was fullest of interest, both beyond and within her home. For some two or three years she rented a flat in an opposite house to their own, to which she used to retire after breakfast, and remain often till one o'clock, to avoid the stream of visitors, the morning being her time for writing. The furnished flat contained three rooms—a good sitting-room, with three windows, a bedroom, and behind the bedroom a dressing-room. Sometimes she would sleep there.

It was during the Holland Street days that Jean gave her 'copyright dinners'—for so it appears they were called. These dinners were of a very unostentatious description, and were given twice a week to twelve convalescents, chosen by the Kensington clergy. On one occasion I was present at the meal. The dinners were served in a rather shabby, good-sized room on what we should call the drawing-room floor, in a street approached by an

## Some of her Charities

archway close to the old churchyard, perhaps pulled down by this time. A certain Mrs. Hulford, who owned the house, cooked the dinners. They never varied: roast beef with Yorkshire pudding one day, with roast potatoes and plenty of gravy (the function lubricated by each convalescent being allowed a glass of small beer); boiled mutton and suet puddings the other day. Mrs. Ingelow said grace the day I was there, and carved the large joint (she was a capital carver). I suppose Jean, who always liked to keep in the background, handed the vegetables. The viands disappeared with surprising celerity, and when all had eaten as much as they liked or could, the convalescents trooped down the narrow stairs with smiling faces.

If I ever knew, I do not call to mind how long the dinners continued to be given. Jean had another idea for helping the poor, which she was able to carry out, and which gave her great pleasure. It was to maintain a Bible-woman of her own, who understood nursing and cleaning also. This woman had a certain

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

sum to be spent for the poor, at her own discretion, and I think once a week she used to come to Jean to relate her experiences and to ask for instructions.

The place selected as most suitable for the Bible-woman's ministrations was chosen by Miss Mary Whately, daughter of Archbishop Whately, who helped Jean with her advice in carrying out the scheme.

Jean received for many years large sums for her writings, which sold remarkably well both in England and America. Her volume which came out in 1863 went through twenty-six editions in a few years, and many thousands of her books were sold in the United States. Her tastes being exceedingly simple, and her personal expenditure small, she had a large margin left, and was therefore able to indulge her charitable proclivities without stint, and I think it is probable that the pleasure of giving away much of what she earned by her pen, was even greater than the pleasure of composition.

Jean always expressed her satisfaction at the

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appreciation her books met with in America. She had many correspondents in that country, and knew personally some of its most celebrated writers. Letters from American authors used often to be sent to her through her publishers, Messrs. Roberts Brothers, of Boston, Massachusetts, with whom she frequently corresponded, expressing her desire that all works of hers published in the United States should be sent out from that firm.

Jean's life has sometimes been compared with Mrs. Oliphant's (they died within a few weeks of each other), and in one respect there was a great similarity, both being women who kept away from 'the woman's movement,' as it is called, and from that undesirable celebrity, self-applause and newspaper-puffing. But I should conclude (having read the lives both of Mrs. Oliphant and Christina Rossetti, and from what I have heard by word of mouth of the latter) that Jean Ingelow and Christina Rossetti had many more sympathies in common than Jean Ingelow and Mrs. Oliphant. I believe Jean was never personally acquainted

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

with Mrs. Oliphant, but with Christina Rossetti she was on friendly terms for some years. I once met Miss Rossetti, and she appeared as shy and reserved as Jean herself. She and Jean met and corresponded, and had, I believe, a sincere esteem for each other.

I have been present on one or two occasions when Mrs. Ingelow had an afternoon party in the square garden in Holland Street. Many celebrated people have from time to time attended those little informal entertainments. Miss Alford, when visiting her relations in Kensington Palace, attended one or two of these *réunions*, and gives a charming description of a little talk she had with Jean, and how pleased she was with her quiet cordiality.

An interesting circumstance connected with a young American who for some time lived in Holland Street may be recorded here. It seems that this young girl had an ardent admiration for Jean Ingelow as a poet, but being too diffident to call and ask for an introduction, she used to walk down the broad paved passage leading from Holland Street to Ken-



## Some of her Charities

sington High Street through the churchyard, and of which the side was bounded by the Ingelows' garden, in order that she might have the meagre consolation of *touching* the garden wall. That garden was so near Kensington Parish Church (at that time an ugly building with a gallery all round, and of which the Vicar was the late Venerable Archdeacon Sinclair) that on a Sunday evening in summer, seated on the lawn, you could distinctly hear the singing of Bishop Ken's evening hymn which, to the fine old tune rarely heard now, used invariably to be sung at the end of the evening service, and it was sung heartily as with one voice by the large congregation.

In speaking of old hymns and old tunes, I am reminded of a little incident coming under my own observation. About five-and-twenty years ago I used to attend a church in Sussex, not unlike Kensington old church externally, and like that building, with its gallery all round. I used to sit in the gallery, and had noticed on Sunday evenings, seated nearly opposite to me, an elderly man, looking like a day-labourer in

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his Sunday clothes. I think I observed him more than I should have done on account of the absolute stolid dulness and utter want of interest his face expressed. But one Sunday evening 'Glory to Thee' was sung to the good old tune. Instantly the old man's countenance lighted up with such a look of delighted recognition as he turned to the organ as I have seldom seen on any face. The service was no longer dull to him; he could and did enter into it with joy. Did that beautiful hymn of Bishop Ken's, sung to its old-fashioned tune, bring back to his mind days of innocent childhood, when he had heard it in some village church, standing by his mother's side? And did it recall to his dull mind, now brightened into sweet memories, that mother's voice, probably long silent in the grave?

The little Ingelows, whilst their elders and the servants were at evening service on Sundays, used to assemble with their mother in the pretty kitchen of their house at Skirbeck, and standing in a semicircle beside her, would sing hymns with her after saying the Cate-

## Some of her Charities

chism. It was such a pretty kitchen, with its red-brick floor! I can see it now, and the hop-covered arbour at the bottom of the garden to which the children were wont to resort in their play-hours. The house in which Jean was born, and that in which her grandparents lived, were, as I said in a former chapter, on the outskirts of Boston, and the one called Ingelow House, in honour of Jean, is, I am told, now divided into two houses.



## CHAPTER VI

### *WORK AND FRIENDSHIPS*



## CHAPTER VI

### WORK AND FRIENDSHIPS

‘It was a village built in a green rent,  
Between two cliffs that skirt the dangerous bay.

‘A reef of level rock runs out to sea,  
And you may lie on it and look sheer down  
Just where the *Grace of Sunderland* was lost  
And see the elastic banners of the dulse  
Rock softly, and the orange star-fish creep  
Across the laver, and the mackerel shoot  
Over and under it, like silver boats  
Turning at will and plying under water.’

*Brothers and a Sermon.*

It was probably when visiting Filey, on the Yorkshire coast, some years before she brought out the volume of Poems (First Series) entitled ‘Poems by Jean Ingelow,’ that Jean composed ‘Brothers and a Sermon,’ for the scene is laid at Filey, and she greatly delighted

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

in the village, and 'Filey Brig.' Moreover, in some of the customs of the place she would find all her aspirations of the quaint and beautiful realized.

On those sweet summer Sundays, how joyful she must have felt when, after evening service at the little tree-embowered, moss-grown old church, the Filey fishermen formed a procession, and in perfect time, as they swung down the little rural lane leading to the village, would sing with their splendid full voices 'Glory to Thee, my God, this night,' or to the tune of Old Hundredth 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun'; marching on, all voices hushed but their own, even the birds gone to roost. How inspiring was it, and yet how peaceful! Jean's heart, habitually attuned to heavenly melodies, would be deeply stirred, as with the rest of the congregation she followed the procession down the shady lanes to the quiet village; and even less thoughtful visitors to Filey would find their hearts rise a little above the atmosphere of the world, and feel something of the pure peace of a better country.



## Work and Friendships

Many of these fishermen were Wesleyans, and would go to their own chapel for morning service, but attended the parish church of an evening.

Much did Jean love Filey Brig, and often would she and her mother walk over its dangerous rocks in search of sea anemones, or when the tide was rising, to watch the syle come in. A wonderful sight this was. The whole coast would shine like silver as the myriads of little fishes crowded in with the tide, to be speedily caught and made merchandise of. In such numbers do they come when in season, that in those days villagers who possessed a little land would use them for manure when they had eaten or cured as many as they could make use of.

Filey is a dangerous coast; many lives have been lost on the Brig. In the days when I was there with the Ingelows the village was most rural and picturesque, and there were only two or three houses on the shore, the village being at a little distance. I have seen photographs of Filey as it now is, and failed to

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

recognise in the showy terraces on the sea-front and the broad esplanade, the modest old-world village of my younger days.

I remember one day, on the occasion of that visit, going with Jean and her mother, together with their friends Dr. and the Miss Ogles, to spend the afternoon at Flamborough. Our party went in various conveyances, reaching a comfortable farmhouse near Flamborough Head in time for tea. If I remember aright, the farmhouse and its surroundings had belonged to Mr. Ogle, formerly Vicar of Boston, and was now inhabited by some very homely, hospitable Yorkshire people. We had tea in a long, low kitchen, and a very substantial tea it was. Before the meal was finished the pleasure of the party was damped by the evident distress of our good hostess on her opening a letter which had been handed to her. She hastily left the room, and we did not see her again till just before our departure, when she told us the letter announced the death on the previous day of a near relation.

‘But I knew something would happen,’ said

## Work and Friendships

the good woman, 'for we sat down thirteen to tea!'

Yorkshire people of the middle and lower classes are, like the Scotch, somewhat superstitious.

When very young I was one of the guests at a large family gathering on the eve of the marriage of one of Jean's aunts, who showed her Scotch ancestry in her fears for what was unlucky. In the course of the evening, not noticing that just behind her was a small table on which stood a valuable china bowl, she made a step backwards, upsetting the bowl, which was broken to pieces in its fall. This caused Jean's aunt great distress. Could a marriage be happy which was heralded in by such a piece of dire ill-luck? But her mind regained its tranquillity, for soon after, in walking upstairs, she stumbled. This happy awkwardness cancelled the ill omen of the breakage. It was as *lucky* to stumble in going upstairs as *unlucky* to break anything on the eve of your wedding-day.

This lady, having been instructed (I suppose

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

by some old Scotch servant) that a bride should wear 'something new, something blue, and something borrowed,' took care to secure her future happiness by carrying out these instructions. I perfectly remember her showing me her turquoise ring as the 'something blue.'

Let us hope the married life of Jean's aunt, owing to the 'something new, the something blue, and the something borrowed,' was very happy; but I think the happiness could not have been of an *exciting* nature, for it is reported that after she had been married a year, when her sister, Mrs. Ingelow, mentioned the circumstance to her, she exclaimed:

'A year! It seems a *thousand* years.'

Perhaps, therefore, after all, the stumbling upstairs on the day before the wedding did *not* make up for the breaking of the china bowl.

I remember the country clergyman she married. It was on one occasion when Jean, or one of her sisters, was staying at the parsonage, that she and her aunt, standing at the hall door to see the good man mount his

## Work and Friendships

horse, which he did at last after several futile efforts, the wife apostrophised him thus as he ambled out of sight :

‘Yes; there you go, looking as awkward as though you had never been on a horse before,’ or words to that effect.

‘Yes, ma’am,’ suddenly said a voice behind her (it was the groom, whose vicinity she had forgotten), ‘master’s reckoned the worst rider in the county.’

Among the more intimate friends of her middle life, few exercised a greater influence over Jean’s literary tastes than Mr. Ruskin, and he never ceased to correspond with her, nor did his personal regard for her ever die out. With the late Archbishop of Dublin and Lady Plunket, Jean became acquainted many years ago when meeting them for the first time at Cannes, and with the Hon. Isabel Plunket the friendship begun there lasted to the end of Jean’s life. I have read a very pretty story of Miss Plunket’s called ‘Hester’s Fortune.’ On one of my last visits to Jean, before she was confined to her bed, I saw the

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

photograph of Miss Plunket on her dressing-table.

With the late Dean of Llandaff, Dr. Vaughan, and his fascinating wife (a sister of Dean Stanley's) Jean also had much pleasant intercourse. I once saw an acceptance to an invitation Jean had given Mrs. Vaughan. It was worded thus :

‘MY DEAR FRIEND,

‘I shall certainly be with you on ——. If I am alive I shall be with you in the body, and if I am dead I shall be with you in the spirit.’

On another occasion Mrs. Vaughan, driving through some London streets with one of Jean's brothers, with whom she had been conversing on the tragic contrast between the lives of the well-to-do and the poor, exclaimed, as she looked at the cabman on the box who was driving them :

‘Kind creatures! Why don't they murder us?’

## Work and Friendships

With Dean Stanley and with Lady Augusta Jean was on intimate terms, as also with Mr. and Lady Charlotte Locker. Mr. Locker, afterwards Locker-Lampson, being himself a poet, would have much in common with her.

I am told that the late Mr. Mundella was an intimate friend of Jean's. He survived her by one day. With his daughter, Mrs. Roby Thorpe, I knew there had been an affectionate friendship; but many of her more noted friends I never saw, and perhaps of many less publicly known I have never heard. What I always did know was that she shrank from publicity, and kept quite aloof from 'society' so-called. Probably for that very reason she maintained her originality and simplicity of mind as long as she lived.

Among Jean Ingelow's literary critics, Gerald Massey was one of her admirers and friends in the earlier years of her success, and later she also enjoyed the friendship of Mr. Watts-Dunton. Froude, Russell Lowell, and many others whose writings and opinions she well knew, were among her literary friends; and late



## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

in life she renewed her intercourse with Generals Sir Henry and Sir Francis Norman, whom she had known when they were her brother's school-fellows.

With the late Mr. and Mrs. John Cunliffe and with Miss Catherine Murray there was the most intimate and affectionate friendship for years before Jean's death, with the latter especially, and from this friend I have been supplied with some valuable reminiscences, which appear in chapters nine and ten.



## CHAPTER VII

### *HER BOOKS*



## CHAPTER VII

### HER BOOKS

‘But Hope is ours by right, and Faith by gift.  
Though Time be as a moon upon the wane.  
Who walk with Faith far up the azure lift  
Oft hear her talk of lights to wax again.  
“If man be lost,” she cries, “in this vast sea  
Of being,—lost—he would be lost with Thee  
“Who, for his sake, once, as he hears, lost all!  
For Thou wilt find him at the end of the days :  
Then shall the flocking souls that thicker fall  
Than snowflakes on the everlasting ways  
Be counted, gathered, claimed.—Will it be long?  
Earth has begun already her swan-song.”’

*Speranza.*

It was, I suppose, as a sort of unbending from the higher task of writing her thoughts in verse that Jean Ingelow frequently indulged herself by writing prose. Some of her friends and admirers regretted that she did so, but, on the

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

other hand, her short stories especially had many praises. The *Spectator*, writing of her 'Stories told to a Child,' in October, 1899, speaks of them as 'one of the classics of children's books, and surely,' continues the writer, 'Miss Ingelow never did better work than these little stories, which seem to be perfection from whatever point you regard them.'

These are the little stories which appeared in the *Youth's Magazine*, and of which Mrs. Fyvie Mayo remarks, as we have previously quoted: 'The public at that time took not the slightest notice.'

'Off the Skelligs,' the best known of Jean Ingelow's longer stories, is interesting, especially in the early chapters, as being in some sort the recollection of her own childhood's experiences. This story was succeeded by 'Fated to be Free,' a kind of sequel to 'Off the Skelligs,' and appeared first in *Good Words*, illustrated by Pinwell, who, however, died before the numbers were completed, the story being divided into twelve parts in *Good Words*, thus being completed in one year. It was

## Her Books

Pinwell who so exquisitely illustrated the 'High Tide' and 'Winstanley' in the illustrated volume of Jean's First Series of Poems, brought out by Dalziel; the style of dress of that period being admirably depicted by him. Pinwell succeeded less in his delineations of modern people and scenes. But he was a great artist, and his early death must have been much deplored by those who can appreciate beauty in 'black and white.'

'Don John' was published in 1881, and was much ridiculed in a certain well-known review. The droll part of it was, however, that the very same review two years afterwards, praised 'Don John' as highly as before it had censured it, and these two reviews, following each other, caused much merriment in the Ingelow circle.

'Sarah de Berenger' appeared first in *Good Words*, and 'John Jerome,' the last of Jean Ingelow's prose works, with the exception of some short pieces, was published in one volume in 1886.

Her Third Series of Poems came out in 1885.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

In this book Mr. Mackenzie Bell considers that perhaps her masterpiece was 'Echo and the Ferry,' where, he says, 'We see in its most perfect development her marvellous knowledge of, and deep insight into, the mysteries of child-life—an insight which is itself a mark of genius. Listen to the first and last stanzas of the poem, where the word-painting is so striking, that for a moment we seem actually to see the scenes and persons described :

“ Ay, Oliver ! I was but seven, and he was eleven ;  
He looked at me pouting and rosy. I blushed where I  
stood.  
They had told us to play in the orchard (and I only  
seven !  
A small guest at the farm) ; but he said, ‘ Oh, a girl  
was no good !’  
So he whistled and went ; he went over the stile to the  
wood.  
It was sad, it was sorrowful. Only a girl—only seven !  
At home in the dark London smoke I had not found it  
out.  
The pear-trees looked on in their white, and blue birds  
flashed about,  
And they too were angry as Oliver. Were they  
eleven ?  
I thought so. Yes, everyone else was eleven—eleven !”

## Her Books

‘Then the child of seven, grown out of childhood, says the day before her wedding :

“ Shall I cross by the ferry to-morrow, and come in my white  
To that little low church? and will Oliver meet me anon?

\* \* \* \* \*

Will the grave parson bless us? Hark, hark! in the dim failing light

I hear her! As then the child's voice clear and high, sweet and merry

Now she mocks the man's tone with—‘Hie over! Hie over the ferry!’

‘And Katie.’ ‘And Katie.’ ‘Art out with the glow-worms to-night,

My Katie?’ ‘My Katie!’ For gladness I break into laughter

And tears. Then it all comes again, as from far-away years ;

Again, some one else—oh, how softly!—with laughter comes after,

Comes after—with laughter comes after.”’

‘An Arrow-slit’ has much quaint beauty.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Playing at the ball, my dearest of all

When she grows older how will it be?

I dwell far away from her thoughts to-day

That heed not, need not, or mine or me.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

‘Sing, “O an my love were a fledgeling dove  
That flutters forlorn o’ her shallow nest,  
’Tis I would render her service tender,  
And carry her, carry her on my breast !”’

Mr. Mackenzie Bell in his admirable paper gives much praise to ‘Holy Songs.’ He says: ‘How beautiful, how characteristic of the noblest poetry, are these stanzas with the motto “Consider the Lilies of the Field !”’

“When through the meads I go,  
Or where Lent-lilies blow,  
Or purple pasque-flowers, and primroses pale ;  
I think they looked e’en so,  
When my Lord lived below ;  
So in their month made sweet the chosen vale.

“All tender and all mild,  
A little two-years’ child,  
He marked them trembling on the slender stem.  
Sweet Innocent ! and He  
Did stoop, it well may be,  
Right pleased, as other babes, to gather them.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Lord, when I stand and gaze  
On the night heavens, Thy ways  
Confound my thoughts, they are too great for me ;  
But wonders, these are none,  
Thou hast them so outdone  
In the great ways of Thy humility.”



## Her Books

‘The last line here,’ says Mr. Mackenzie Bell, ‘conveys so perfectly the sublime idea it is meant to express, that it ought to become a part of our language as a familiar quotation.

‘But,’ he continues, ‘perhaps the most beautiful of all the poems in this volume, which evidently enshrines some of the poet’s deepest thoughts, is that with the motto: “For Thy Name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great!”

“In great London as I walk’d, and day was dying,  
And a shifting throng unended lined the street,  
O, my heart it fell a-sighing, fell a-sighing,  
For their want, their burden’d lives, their aching feet.

“Passing on for whom Christ died, for whom He liveth,  
Whom He pleadeth with and for from age to age ;  
Trifler, mourner, outcast, erring, though he giveth  
Thought nor care to his great hope and heritage.

“O Thy patience, mighty Father ! Dost Thou show it  
Most to them, or most to us that on Thee call ?  
Saying : ‘ Lord, we seek Thy way, and yearn to know it,’  
While these others whom Thou lovest want for all—

“Want the light and air where, dank, all foulness dwelleth,  
Want the fellowship of saints their hands to take,  
Crying : ‘ One are we in Him whose love excelleth ;  
Mine is thine, and I am thine for Christ His sake.’

\* \* \* \* \*

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

“Some love darkness more than light, and choose it rather;  
Shine and turn them to Thy light, and they shall see.  
Bear the burdens of the poor, O tender Father,  
Ease the hearts that want, nor know their want is  
Thee.

“My afflicted God, to these afflicted yearning  
Liest Thou low? then bring me low to meet Thee  
there;  
Give me, Christ, Thy poor to teach, that with them  
learning  
I may reach Thy feet and hold them, Thou All-Fair.

“O to these give hope in life and peace in dying;  
Thou hast tasted death, Thou knowest all its sting;  
O on me bestow my heart's desire, and sighing  
Still to shepherd them for Thee, Thou Shepherd  
King.”

Mr. Mackenzie Bell also speaks of Jean's  
‘gift of painting aspects of nature with absolute fidelity. “Divided,”’ he says, ‘pre-eminently exemplifies this quality in the First Series of her poems:

“An empty sky, a world of heather,  
Purple of foxglove, yellow of broom;  
We two among them wading together,  
Shaking out honey, treading perfume!”

‘Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton,’ he adds,  
‘who, as well as being an eminent critic, is

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equipped as a naturalist by careful training, once told me that the poet achieved a very fine and subtle effect in the phrase "an empty sky." "It is only," said Mr. Watts-Dunton, "when the sky is *empty* that the scent of the broom and heath is exhaled by the sun."

Jean was a great lover of birds and of a garden. Some of her happiest leisure hours in later years were spent in the garden and conservatory of the house in Holland Villas Road, which she lived in for the last twenty years of her life. The pretty conservatory opened out of the drawing-room, and was furnished with books, sofa, and rugs, as well as with flowers and flowering shrubs. It was here Jean frequently sat of a summer afternoon. And here it was, and in the sweet, well-shaded, velvet-lawned garden leading from the conservatory by a balcony with a short flight of steps, that she sometimes received her friends. The *Athenæum*, in one of its notices of Jean, written shortly after her death, says: 'One of the last appearances of Mr. Locker-Lampson was in that very garden one summer afternoon;

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and in that guest and hostess passed away, types that are rapidly becoming extinct—delightful in old-world courtesy, indulgent to the errors of days gone by, if a little impatient to the moods of a generation younger than their own.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### *LAST DAYS*



## CHAPTER VIII

### LAST DAYS

Sweet is the perfume of a perfect life,  
Dear is the incense of a noble name,  
Happy the ear removed from worldly strife  
That only hears the echo of the voice's fame.  
Jean Ingelow ! these attributes were yours.  
Sweet songstress ! gifted mistress of the pen !  
You sang of Hope that still for us endures,  
And weaved your lyrics from the lives of Men ;  
You told of what has been, and what perchance might be ;  
You held the banner of the Great, Good Right.  
And so across the unknown Silent Silver Sea  
We bid "Good-morn !" in faith to your "Good-night !" '  
*From 'Punch,' by permission.*

JEAN INGELOW'S life on the whole must be considered to have been a very happy one. Independently of the delight her writings gave her, she had the most cheerful of homes with her two brothers ; moreover, her mother was

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

spared to her till she herself had passed her meridian. Mrs. Ingelow was a woman of considerable intellect, and was thoroughly able to appreciate her daughter's talents, though they were in a widely different groove from her own. And after the death of this much beloved mother, Jean still had many years of cheerful and congenial companionship with her brothers in the home they shared together. Some of her letters to a friend which will be seen in a later chapter, give some insight into her domestic life, but the one thought which predominated, and which she seldom touched upon in ordinary conversation was, I think, the thought that this life, even at its best, was but a way-side shelter, from which one could look with longing eyes to the breaking of the clouds, for the sight of the home 'made without hands, eternal in the Heavens.'

'I do not want to die,' she once said to a relative she tenderly loved. 'But I want to be dead.'

She was, I think, free from that physical fear of death which causes distress to so many who are yet strong in faith. The beautiful lines



## Last Days

in 'Holy Songs' beginning with the words 'Somewhere quiet in the rest of God' reveal her inmost heart, and these lines were written when, as yet, she had had fewer griefs than most people have suffered who are no longer young, and not only, as far as one can tell, fewer griefs, but many more pleasures and enjoyments, of the highest and most gratifying kind, than generally fall to our lot in life.

But a great calamity did fall upon her comparatively late in life in the sudden death of her brother, William Frederick, in the autumn of 1886. From this heavy and unexpected blow she never really recovered, though she, in time, regained the calm serenity which usually characterized her, and would not let those still left to her suffer from seeing an outward display of grief. Especially did she show an outward cheerfulness in the home she now shared with her only remaining brother, bereft, as she was, of the sunshine of William's life.

To other members of her family, and connections too, she was still as ever the self-forgetting, loving friend she had ever been, but

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I think her literary career may be said almost to have closed with the death of her brother William. Many less poignant griefs indeed she had had before, of which, perhaps, one of the greatest was the death of a young niece, an only child, for whom she had the tenderest love and admiration. But there the grief was chiefly for the bereaved parents. She had such love and reverence for the young, that for them to be taken back soon to God seemed only meet to her. For these she could say :

‘ Hurts of sin shall not thee soil,  
Carking care thy beauty spoil,  
So early blest, so young forgiven.’

I have said that Jean appears to have ceased writing from the time of her brother's death, but I do not know that it was in consequence of his death, though it may have been. Her Third Series of Poems appeared in 1885, but this volume, referred to by Mr. Mackenzie Bell, did not meet with the enthusiasm that had once been accorded her. Another generation had arisen which knew not Jean Ingelow, though in America her books were still in

## Last Days

demand, and among the true lovers of poetry there her name is still a household word.

As regards America, though the Americans live faster even than the moderns of our own country, it may be observed that their literature has not run into such excess of sensationalism as ours has done. They can still appreciate Longfellow, and they can still delight in Jean Ingelow. This love of her poetry in the United States was shown conspicuously after the death of Lord Tennyson, when some representative authors there petitioned our late Queen to make Jean Ingelow Poet Laureate. There were many in England also who would have been glad if such could have been, but there was no precedent for such a distinction being accorded a woman.

In 1896 Jean's health visibly failed, and for some months before her death, in July 1897, she kept to two pleasant rooms upstairs in the house at Kensington, which she and her youngest and only living brother, considerably her junior, shared. He had lived with her all his life and was with her at the last.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

What more is there to tell? So quiet was the life, so quiet was its close, that those who stood around her bed on that July morning might almost have said :

‘ We thought her dying when she slept,  
And sleeping when she died.’

Her friend Dr. Walsham How, Bishop of Wakefield, read the Service when she was laid to rest in Brompton Cemetery, his last public appearance officially, for he himself soon followed her to the grave. He died within three weeks afterwards. Antoinette Sterling, one of Jean’s warm admirers, and whose friendship she had long reciprocated, sang ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ with great beauty and pathos after her funeral as the mourners stood around the grave.

Though Jean Ingelow’s life was singularly retired and uneventful, she yet numbered among her friends some of the best-known men and women of letters both in England and America, and greatly did she enjoy conversation with the great and good, but ‘society’ so called, never had any charms for her, and she persistently kept to the retired habits of an

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English gentlewoman of the last generation—a generation of home-loving people fast dying out, it is true. ‘And pity ’tis, ’tis true,’ for, after all, the extreme dread of domesticity which characterizes the modern woman quite takes away the quaint charm of originality which made society so piquante in ‘the days that are no more.’

In conclusion I would quote a few lines from an interesting notice written by ‘Vera’ after Jean’s death.

‘It is somewhat strange that when there is so much talk about “representative women,” and this one and that is feeling aggrieved that she has not secured passing advertisement by appearing in a list of those who were on a recent occasion so self-designated, we should have been called upon to review the life and work of Jean Ingelow. Here was indeed a representative of whom her sex had every reason to be proud. Tennyson, Swinburne, Lowell, Ruskin, all the best poets and most artistic minds of her age, have recognised her charm and sweetness, the beauty and strength

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

of her verses; few women of this century have attained to more popularity than this gentle singer, and the music of her song will echo long after the names of those who have striven for and attained a publicity from which she ever shrank have passed into oblivion.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Comparisons are, of course, odious, but it is impossible for the thoughtful to overlook the lesson that the lives of women like Jean Ingelow and Mrs. Oliphant and Christina Rossetti ought to impress upon women of to-day. If the simplicity, the refinement, the purity, so to say, that marked their work, are absent from the writings of their successors, even more noticeable is the attitude of mind, the habit of life, and the influence of those who to-day occupy places somewhat akin to those vacated by these gifted women. That it is not necessary to sound trumpet-blasts and shout to every crowd in order to win a place for one’s self is evidenced by the lives of these writers, nor can the fact that they resolutely shrank from supporting the women’s movement be in any

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way attributed to their lack of intelligence or sympathy with their sex. They worried over no problems, preached no doctrines of despair or discontent, claimed no "rights," stirred up the muddy depths of no turbulent passions and emotions, struck no keynotes, sounded no discords, avoided all forms of advertisement, and withal will be numbered among the most distinguished, the strongest-minded, and the most admirable women of their century.'

In the Church of St. Barnabas, Kensington, Jean Ingelow's surviving brother, with the sanction and approval of her friend the Rev. G. R. Thornton, the Vicar, has placed a brass tablet to her memory with these words inscribed :

TO THE MEMORY

OF

J E A N I N G E L O W,

*Poet and Writer,*

1820-1897.

FOR TWENTY YEARS A PARISHIONER.





CHAPTER IX  
*CHARACTERISTICS*



## CHAPTER IX

### CHARACTERISTICS

' Her soul was like unto an ocean shell  
That ever sounds the keynote of its home.'

*Margaret in the Zebeque.*

THE friend of Jean Ingelow's later years, before mentioned, whose reminiscences of her are given in this and the next chapter, speaks of them as follows: She was a link between the old times and the new; an English gentlewoman who held her art and its responsibilities sacred, though she called the writing of poetry an accomplishment (as apart from the poetical temperament, which she was always delighted to recognise in people who could not write at all), she never put literature for a moment before her duty as a woman in her own home.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

She could not be seen, so as to be really known, except in this home. To take her simply as an authoress, apart from her own people and her father's house—to tear her likeness out from the family group—could not be done by anyone who knew her, without giving an untrue and misleading idea of her.

It is almost strange in these days to find how quietly a popular writer could live with the world's bustle all around her, almost like one moored among the flowering rushes of a peaceful backwater, while the noisy race went by upon the river. But, indeed, if it had not been so, I think she could not have written at all; unless she had been cherished, shielded, sheltered, as she was, she could hardly have given the message entrusted to her in the form in which it comes to us. With her shy, nervous, sensitive temperament, her intense solicitude about those she loved, her almost painful anxiety to do her duty at any cost to herself, it was easy to believe her when she affirmed, "If I had married, I should *not* have written books."

She began her singing like a bird, as real

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poets do, because she could not help it; and she said that it was a considerable time before she *realised* the general public at all. "What the people at home would think of her *things*" was for long her only wonder.

In speaking of her very early days, she told me that she thought she could hardly exaggerate the reverential awe and love with which she looked up to her parents; they were the final authorities upon everything in her youthful world. She sometimes said of her father that he was a lover to the end of his days; his leisure time in the evening was spent chiefly with his wife, leaving their droll, clever, vigorous boys and girls to amuse themselves, as they certainly did to their hearts' content, in another room. But Jean also was promoted to the friendship of her father, who was pleased with her companionship, although she told me (when asked the question) that she did not suppose he ever knew that she wrote poetry. Apparently this adored father had little caring for art, and still less of personal vanity. When she produced her first earnings, with a petition

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

that he would let himself be painted on ivory of unusually large dimensions, he would not hear of sitting for his portrait, but graciously allowed the artist to take him as he sat working before his desk. The miniature might have been in better drawing otherwise; it always hung in the room where she wrote; but there is a faded, yet striking photograph of Mr. Ingelow in a garden-chair, which gives the impression of a much handsomer man, with a really fine, intellectual face.

Ruskin, in his 'Proserpina,' gives a faithful delineation of a primrose both in pen and pencil. The words might stand for a description of Jean Ingelow. They occur in what could be used as an allegory for parents, and begin with a picture of a poppy, whose scarlet cup cannot be developed until it has split up and tossed away the cruel cap that has held it in bondage and left its petals marked for ever. 'Not so flowers of gracious breeding,' says the sage of his primrose, 'first confined as strictly as the poppy, with five pinching green leaves, whose points close over it'; then 'the little

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yellow ones peep out . . . they find the light delicious, and grow and grow and throw themselves into their perfect rose' . . . 'but the primrose remains always in its calyx, its first home ; they are never separated, and the calyx remains part of the flower, which dies in it when its day is over.'

So it was with Jean Ingelow.

Although she gladly hailed every effort made by her friends to enlarge and enrich their lives by any sort of intellectual or philanthropic work, she certainly belonged to the old school of thought so far as regards public life for women, and she experienced a veritable shock each time that anyone she cared for stepped across the old barrier, as she deemed it, needlessly ; still, she differed in silence ; it was far from her to discuss these points, and she sometimes let herself be reminded with a smile that she, in her day, had gone to the verge by publishing her poems. To the generation before her such writing was but the graceful and interesting diversion of a gentlewoman, to be kept for the delectation of her own circle ;

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

and Jean's beautiful words were, now and again, quoted to her, and against her :

' He with good gifts that most is blest,  
Or stands for God above the rest,  
Let him so think : " To serve the dear,  
The lowlier children I am here.

' " It is the children's bread I break ;  
He trusts me with it for their sake  
(Hunger I must if none it shares)—  
It is but mine when it is theirs." '

When the Third Series of Miss Ingelow's Poems was published, a writer in an American review, which I can only quote from memory, spoke somewhat in this wise about her first volume of poems. It came out just as his country was recovering from the convulsions of the terrible civil war which had bid fair to rend it asunder. The clear, pure voice of the new singer, he said, rose into the air like a bird's voice, poignant sweet after a great storm, comforting, consoling, prophetic, and as American homes were just then building up again, families reuniting after the cruel strain and anguish, the heart of the great people was tuned to take part in the melody. This thought



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also applies to individuals. Was it not on the whole the positive joy in her poems, the actual consolation and radiant peace that she got out of life and nature, that the generation to which she ministered recognised as her best gift to it? It should be borne in mind, in thinking of her times, that it had been a sort of fashion to cultivate the sentiment of grief, and to encourage affliction to make its abode with mourners. It was rather taken for granted that a poetess would be beautifully morbid if she could not be splendidly strong. But Miss Ingelow always deprecated the adoration of sorrow, and could not away with the idea of making the living suffer loss and discomfort from mistaken notions of loyalty to the dead. And she had also an exultant Hebrew feeling for the sanctity and beauty of human life and work, for while she wrote, the old class-exclusivism was being broken down, and the dignity of labour was beginning to appeal to the whole commonwealth.

Miss Ingelow was pleased with the following anecdote which I once sent to her. An aged

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

lady, a Friend, had a little while before been slowly dying, in a house filled with every luxury. At a time of great suffering she wanted something very difficult for her perplexed nurses to get, namely, a book which would not be incongruous in her circumstances, and yet would charm away her pain. In the end they procured for her 'Stories told to a Child,' which pleased her so much that she never would let it go out of her sight again while life lasted.

Miss Ingelow's poems were popular with men, critics or otherwise, because they were so healthy; her intimacy with nature, or her philosophy of life, even charmed readers who could not appreciate the full depth of her poetic and religious nature. In India she was hailed with enthusiasm by exiled Englishmen; and I remember hearing a well-known civilian who loved and lived with the classics, speaking of the exquisite sense of human fellowship which she gave to his lonely days.

And to people whom I knew at home, in very dull and cheerless places, how often the very name of Jean Ingelow meant to them an escape

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from the grinding of most sordid circumstances, straight out into the dewy loveliness of dawn.

An invitation on one occasion was sent to the first East End club opened for the rougher kind of factory girls, to drink tea with Miss Ingelow in her garden at Kensington. The matron, whose days were consumed in the laborious cooking and serving-up of meat-puddings, in a cheap restaurant, all the summer through, betrayed unawares her intense longing to go with the girls, and 'behold with her own eyes the lady who had written "*Persephone*"!' So the matron was included in the party, and a very festive entertainment it was, the hostess and her kind neighbour Miss Molyneux wearing their best dresses and bonnets for the benefit of the appreciative guests, and being rewarded by hearing the girls' excited shouts, when they found 'apples sticking to *trees*' in that remarkable place!

Once I found that the poems had been, next to the Bible, the very inspiration of happiness to two heavily-burdened ladies, reduced to poverty. The two green volumes lying on their

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

table had, they said, kept them up to a higher level of courage and endurance, fed their sense of beauty, and filled their souls with visions of sacred things.

Jean dearly loved (except for weeding) to exercise herself among plants. Once we were together in a neglected old country garden, with permission to do exactly what we liked. Her countenance while she chose out seedlings, made cuttings, and cracked up ripe pods, recklessly slashing, slicing and uprooting, enchanted like a child with the sweet wilderness, was a study : for any excitement of thought used to make her eyes dilate and fill with light. I never saw her more animated in any other place.

And it was a real pleasure to meet Jean at a wayside railway-station in the country. She would stand stock still, 'at gaze' among the rustic surroundings, till she had gathered them all into her ken, before she could be urged through the gate to yield up her ticket ; and it was generally the least remarkable thing which seized her fancy and fired her imagination. There was always a spice of independence as to

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what she chose to admire for the moment. Once, when taken up to see a certain woodland path, and expected to revel in the green glades beyond, she turned her back to it all, audaciously declaring that she would look at nothing but the clustering brown cottage roofs below; 'roofs were bewitching — they hid, and yet they suggested all the life they hid;' as if she felt that some vapour of the essence of human existence was floating up from them into the blue above.

She desired often to be taken out into solitary places to think and feel, to drink in the rustling noises of the earth and the 'ecstatic chirp of winged things,' but she was so timid that she always wished to keep an unseen person within earshot. Her early studies in the habits and ways of birds made her a delightful companion in the country. She could tell the meaning of so many of the birds' calls and cries, and could recognise their individual notes in a chorus of song. Being very long-sighted, as well as so intimate with them, she could also distinguish their forms among the boughs and branches, and used to be amazed at her friends' 'blind-

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

ness' out of doors, because so many things hidden from them appeared as plain as print to her; but since 'we see only what we go out to see,' Jean was also quite blind to many things which attracted the attention of other people, and she used sometimes to ask for and listen with an open ear to a categorical list of objects which other and differently trained eyes could discern by brook and copse. She could find birds' nests as fast as any schoolboy. How well a great admirer of hers, Phil Robinson, has shown that natural history must be learnt from childhood! Several kinds of birds, among them the blue-tit, used to build in the garden at Kensington. They were always carefully fed during the winter, chiefly with suet hung about the bushes in walnut-shells.

Miss Ingelow's appreciation of new acquaintances was sometimes as unexpected as that of her landscapes. Retiring as she was, she was known to take to people whom her friends had carelessly passed by, and gave herself great pleasure in finding out their best points and setting them before their fellow-creatures in a

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fresh light. She loved youth and genuine enthusiasms; other folks' hobbies, fancies and ways of doing their work or play always interested her: but she shrank painfully from anything approaching to a scene or any display of emotion—this last, perhaps, because her power of grasping the whole strength of grief at once was so great.

I recollect one day, when she was being rashly told of a girl whose faithful lover, after many trials, was at the point of death from fever, that she interrupted the speaker sharply, crying impatiently: 'Well, she has *had* him; she has *had* his love!' for any other aspect of the case was intolerable to the highly-strung nature; still, at the moment, her manner appeared to be wanting in sympathy.

And in her turn Jean defied the platitudes of condolence with brave, cheerful words, until the last sudden sorrow of her life, her brother's death, broke her spirit. The first time we met after the death of a sister's only child (the Dora of her poem) she at once showed me a lovely portrait with smiles and ready speech about



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‘the darling’s picture,’ but this only meant: ‘You *know* what this inexpressible loss is to me and mine. I will not have you make a moan; I cannot bear it.’ Her pen was laid aside for nearly a year in consequence of this bereavement—‘a long time at my age,’ as she said quietly afterwards.

The thing which impressed me most at the Ingelows’ home in Kensington was the perfect harmony of the household, and Jean always enjoyed absolute repose of mind, comfort and confidence with her family. To be the centre of this home, and to take her mother’s place in keeping her relations in touch with one another, was her woman’s crown of rejoicing; there was something most engaging in the real humility of her pride in doing this.

The mirth in the house was, before the sudden death of her brother, quite irresistible; never was there a more complete laying aside of the responsibilities and cares of life than when the members of her family circle met round the table at which Jean presided; never was more ecstatic laughter, more humour, more wit and



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less sarcasm; and when the fun was poked at the mistress of the house, at her little ways, her prejudices and her poems, she would look from one loved face to another with radiant, happy eyes that brimmed over with light and love, and an almost pathetic tenderness—an expression full of benediction, and seen at no other time.



CHAPTER X

*LETTERS*



## CHAPTER X

### LETTERS

‘ Peace ! say thy prayers and go to sleep  
Till *some time* One my seal shall break,  
And deep shall answer unto deep,  
When He crieth “AWAKE !” ’

*Song of the Going Away.*

IF it were always possible to let people speak for themselves in a biographical sketch, it would be well ; but Jean Ingelow did not make much of letter-writing. I am permitted to make extracts from a number of letters extending over the last nineteen years of her life, but they are mostly too intimate, too slight to be of general interest, though the peculiar manner in which she conveyed a sense of her affection to those she loved (she was not outwardly very demonstrative) must always have made the letters most precious to those for whom they were intended. And yet, taken as a whole,

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so far as they go, they speak the very truth about her uneventful later life, and show something (always in the very simplest words) about her inward aspirations for others, and for herself.

*'October 2, 1878.*

'I meant to have written before in answer to your interesting letter, so kind and fresh as it was, but you will understand that many painful letters have stood in the way of my ordinary correspondence when I tell you that we have lost a very dear aunt who was to have been staying with us at this very time. I was sent for, and went to the West of England to see her, but was not in time. She was the wife of a country Rector, and her home was long almost a second home to us. Many of the scenes I have been most impressed with, in cottage and farm-house life, I have found there and in that neighbourhood. I do not know whether you feel tempted to idealize the dead. It is a thing I frequently strive against. The endless varieties and peculiarities of character should not be all softened away. It seems to me that in families like my mother's, which

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are chiefly Scotch, there is more keenness of memory in old age, a certain charming shrewdness, and a touch of everyday wisdom seldom found among people purely English—at least, I observe that among my dearest mother's sisters, and among many Scotch friends—old age by no means deprives them of dominion; it is a great pleasure to me to see old people ruling well. . . . We have delightful weather here; I gathered two lovely roses yesterday in our garden, and the dahlias have not yet been touched with frost; but the sweetest suburban garden is a poor substitute for the country. Yet my chief ambition just now is to be settled down for the whole winter. Last winter I spent some months at Cannes, steeping myself in the sunshine, and deeply delighting in the strangely intense colours; but it seems as if more was to be done by abiding in one place and growing in it than by constantly uprooting one's self.'

*'May 28, 1879.*

'I came home from Chislehurst, having stolen a short time for seeing the freshness of spring and hearing the nightingales. . . . Thank you

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very much for those flowers; such as come from you are always so characteristic of you. And those little touches in your letter, showing how sweet your country home is, quite refreshed me. It is so consoling to think of those whom we love as in the midst of a stillness which they have leisure to grow in. Spotted eggshells and orchard petals form the most beautiful litter in the world. . . . There is a great deal that is sweet and pathetic in the book ("Thoughts on the Christian Life," by Hetty Bowman). I am reading it carefully. It is always a pity when an invalid looks at life through her own eyes; but this one is in fairly good spirits. So would most of us be if our masters would let us—if those, I mean, would let us who write the books from which we take our views of what life is. For instance, you do not find in real life that people mourn for the dead so deeply and so persistently as they always do in books. We weep with keen distress and suffer enough; it is a sin in the authors of the day, and it is an unchristian thing to exaggerate, as they do, the effects of grief. I used often to feel in my



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childhood and lay forth that I was very wicked and unfeeling if I let myself be consoled.'

Concerning her novel 'Fated to be Free' she wrote: 'It amuses me that you ever notice such a character as Mrs. Henfrey. I only put her in as a foil. If one or two characters in a book are raised a good deal above the usual level of humanity, people accept them best (as natural) if one brings others down a little below the level, either in culture or intelligence. I often do this, and always try to be kind to my foils and do them full justice, never praising the higher characters much, but leaving them to take care of themselves. It is for their sakes that one writes; for what people can be got to admire and love they easily and almost unconsciously imitate: therefore it is a feat to be aimed at in art, to make them (readers) believe that the higher characters are just such everyday folk as themselves, not at all above their reach. I have always taken great pains to do this, and also to produce a certain homeliness; keeping the higher poetic feeling (so far as I

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

have it) for the most homely persons, or scenes, or ranks in life. Poetry is sweetest when it keeps clear of *ladies and gentlemen*. I always try to get it down.

‘Imagination is such a high faculty that it should repose on things most simple and universal, and if it has been singing a little out of sight, should make haste to come down like a lark on the grass, and never concern itself with rank, or riches, or luxury. . . .’

The following letter was written to a lady who could not, as she affirmed, have written a verse of poetry ‘to save her life.’ But Miss Ingelow was very liberal in her estimate of such persons.

‘BATH,

‘September 29, 1883.

‘And so you have found out with a great deal of help that you are a poet! Do you never think of the celebrated line, “And there are poets who have never sung”? I consider that on the whole the pleasure of this temperament outweighs the pain; because, as you beautifully expressed the matter yourself, some veil appeared to be removed so that you saw all. You can see

## Letters

the full force of fate (as it may be called) and of circumstances ; but this does not always make life appear barren and bare, because at the same time you are able to do justice and feel the power and sweetness of passions and feelings that sway others, even when you yourself are not under their dominion. Some people have said that the heart has no memory, but only the mind—that when people cease keenly to love, for instance, they forget what love was like. But this a poet does not do, and thus in such a sense, if in no other, his “love is love for evermore.”

‘ . . . Do not give way to poet feelings too much ; as for that sense of being lost with the summer, I have always found that the only consolation for it is

“When I am lost to this world  
I shall be found with Thee.”’

It is curious that one of the poems I wrote in the spring brings in that feeling and such words.

‘We are now reading that extraordinary

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book "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." What I may call the more spiritual part of it is deeply interesting to read, whether one wholly agrees with it or not. It informs the mind of so much that enriches it and will certainly be a possession ever after, through the emblems and analogies of Nature. . . . I am going out to dinner to-night; it is one of my duties that is intensely distasteful to me, but must be done. . . . As to not writing to me when you are pressed for time, you know very well that it delights me to have your letters, but I do hope you will spare yourself . . . and when you are busy let me have a post-card. I shall not like it, but I ought to like it.'

‘[*December.*]

‘The planet, is, of course, Venus.\* She is in opposition and at her very nearest; she is a crescent, but no unaided eye can see that this is the case; she has not been so bright for years, and will not be again for a long time. The rosy

\* Supposed by some villagers to be a reappearance of the Star of Bethlehem.

## Letters

effect, no doubt, is from the dawn. It is always the morning star that rustics admire ; none others, as a rule, are up to see it. Last summer when Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn were all visible at half-past nine in the west, they were tired, and going, or gone, to bed. I have not seen the lovely sight.'

\* \* \* \* \*

'I have been reading Lamb's "Letters," with notes by our old friend Canon Ainger. Intensely interesting, such a tragic history ; and at the same time we have got Drummond's "Tropical Africa," another book of rare interest, and opening out the description of a route which I cannot but think will soon be the one route followed by all into Central Africa. In that one small volume seems to be contained more information than is in any six others I know on that subject.'

\* \* \* \* \*

'I wish to say to you that I don't think that you should be so severe on what God so much loves (yourself). We are complete in Him. There is no need of so much "compunction and

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contrition." It is agreed that we are nothing ; but we never shall be here, however much we may improve. We, His dear children, are so constituted that we shall never be any great credit to Him. Let us cast this care too upon Him.

'Surely it is a fine thing for us that are never satisfied with ourselves. This is by no means meant for a reproof. You want a great deal of loving encouragement, especially just now, when you are physically tired and overstrained. We can all delight ourselves in thinking that God is love ; but that the love to us should be the indulgent love of a father to me, to you, one is sometimes afraid to acknowledge.'

After seeing the private view of the 'Old Water Colour Society,' she says of the pictures :

*'April, 1888.*

'Some of them delightful. "The Enchanted Isle," with Ferdinand sitting on a rock, is one of the most imaginative I have ever seen ; and Birket Foster has come out much in his

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"Market-Place at Verona," only the supreme touch is wanting. There were other things most beautifully done, but to my mind wanting in human beauty.'

Writing to a friend who feared she might have criticised one of her books too freely, she says:

'Don't be so sensitive; your reviewing means nothing but partial love and kindness, and I am well used to a good deal of a rough and unfriendly kind, and don't even care about that much. Do you know me very well? Not at all. I have a much thicker skin than you think. As to vexing me, you don't know how. . . . I longed to see some snowdrops, and never thanked you for the aconites. . . .

'P.S. — Tommy' (a grand-nephew) 'aged three, was told by his naughty nurse that if he made such a noise the baby would never be able to walk. "Has he got any feet?" said Tommy. "Oh yes." "Well, then, we'll wait and see."' "

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

The following extract is from a letter to the same friend :

‘I see by your letter that you are really better. You will bloom out with the spring; and truly we do not live by bread alone. The nice Australian letters are a good deal, and because our Lord’s words are altogether right for all time, and not merely in a religious sense: “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” The more we know that we are spirit, that the body is a mere nothing, and the spirit great, and might be wise and holy and happy in the life of God, the better the body will, so to speak, behave itself and be well.’

Thunder always affected Miss Ingelow painfully. I remember once going to a garden-party in the country with her on a stormy day. Nothing but the sternest sense of duty would have carried her there at all; and I could have found it in my heart to wish that we had stayed at home, for she was excessively nervous, shy and stiff, feeling all the time as if the



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electric current was coursing down her own limbs and would hurt anyone who touched her. It turned out afterwards that she had barely recognised the people whom she knew, and had not heard the names of any of the strangers introduced to her. I fancy that several of these last bore away a wrong impression of her that day.

In general, I think hers was a very right judgment, but she was chary of giving advice. It is remarkable that in so large a number of very intimate letters, most of them filled with her friends' concerns, there should be so very little advice; she had a real talent for keeping silent till her opinion was sought, entertaining the sincere belief that other people know their own business best. In cases where her own experience was limited she did not care to advance her abstract theories; but where she felt that love could claim the privilege of giving warning, or of sounding an alarm, her few words were very directly to the point. If, after due consideration, her opinion was overruled, she was never offended.

## Recollections of Jean Ingelow

Prayer was a subject that occupied her mind continuously ; she dwelt on it much in conversation and in letters, urging its importance, and discussing eagerly the amount of temporal blessing which might be asked for with safety. Here is a wise little sentence which deserves to be preserved : ‘ You cannot be a Providence to that poor child ! She belongs to God, and He may not intend you to save her the discipline that perhaps is intended for her.’

CHAPTER XI  
*RETROSPECTIVE*



## CHAPTER XI

### RETROSPECTIVE

‘ Angels of joy and love  
Lean softly from above  
And whisper to her sweet and marvellous things ;  
Tell of the Golden Gate  
That opened wide doth wait,  
And shadow her dim sleep with their celestial wings.

‘ Hearing of that blest shore,  
She thinks on earth no more,  
Contented to forego this wintry land.’

\* \* \* \* \*

*The Snowdrop Monument in Lichfield  
Cathedral.*

ON one occasion Jean Ingelow, on being asked by Mr. Mackenzie Bell if she would write out for him from her own poems the passage she herself preferred, sent him the following lines :

‘ O perfect love which 'dureth long ;  
Dear growth that, shaded by the palms,  
And breathed on by the angels' song,  
Blooms on in Heaven's eternal calms.

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‘How great the task to guard thee here,  
Where wind is rough, and frost is keen,  
And all the air with doubt and fear  
Is chequered birth and death between !

‘Space is against thee—it can part ;  
Time is against thee—it can chill ;  
Words—they but render half the heart ;  
Deeds—they are poor to our rich will.’

The lines are taken from ‘Afternoon at a Parsonage.’

Jean very seldom spoke of her writings in her own family, and was free from the egotism which afflicts some authors even of considerable talent, who seem happiest when quoting their own lines, or discussing the merits of their own works. Jean was happily above this too common weakness, and yet she was perfectly aware that she had great gifts. She never affected to under-rate them, but was alike able to keep ‘the even tenor of her way’ when flattered, courted and praised, as when before that time she had been quite unnoticed and unacknowledged. When her writings were neglected, she knew it was not because they were unworthy of notice ; and when the tide of

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sudden success burst upon her, it found her calm and apparently very little surprised. I think she accepted the verdict of her approving critics as her due, but in no vain-glorious spirit—far from it. She took the good gifts God had given her AS HIS GIFTS, and never made light of them.

What must be so delightful to those of her family and friends who have survived her is the thought that all she wrote was on the side of goodness and truth and love of God and man. As *Punch* in his valedictory lines so beautifully and aptly expresses it, she ‘held the banner of the Great, Good, Right.’ Yes, Jean Ingelow did hold that banner from first to last, a gentle preacher truly, living the pure, beautiful nature and human-nature-loving life which she wrote about and depicted so well. To take a country walk with her was to receive (though she was all unconscious of giving it) a lesson on the *little* things God gives us to notice and enjoy. The poise of some tiny bird on a hawthorn twig, the small (perhaps quite common) fern growing in the cleft of some old wall, or

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the chattering of two or three chaffinches—trifles such as these would make her turn with a look of the liveliest animation to the companions of her walk to enlist their sympathies in the incident.

Some people think that literary women are apt to neglect the minor comforts and refinements of domestic life. I can truly say that this was not the case with Jean Ingelow. She was not only an excellent housekeeper, but an admirable needlewoman. Years ago a relation staying in the house at Kensington, happening one morning between breakfast and lunch to go into the dining-room, found the table covered with patterns for the making of a silk gown, over which Jean was presiding with scissors and pins, etc., remarking that she found making a dress a nice change when tired of writing. Though she could not vie with 'Auntie' in depicting birds with crewels, she excelled in the needlework in vogue in her own day.

A writer in the *Athenæum* tells us that Dora Greenwell once challenged Christina Rossetti to produce a creditable example of skilled



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needlework, and forwarded a work-bag to show what *she* could do. Miss Rossetti does not seem to have entered into the competition, but Jean Ingelow did, as witness her letter to Miss Greenwell.

“Do you know that I have finished a bag for you? The pattern is of my own invention. Is the kettle-holder worked yet? I shall be so proud of it. When I next see Miss Rossetti I shall ask for proof that she can do hemming and sewing. . . .” Miss Ingelow’s work-bag,’ continues the writer, ‘was a beautiful piece of craftsmanship. Garden-flowers, wrought with china ribbons of all colours. . . .’

But Jean was also very valuable in a sick-room. When any of the family were ailing, she it was who was most welcomed by the invalid. Her gentle cheerfulness, her skilful ministrations, and, moreover, her appearing to find nothing a trouble to make things comfortable and restful seemed to soothe the aching head or the feverish frame in a delightful manner.

Jean used to say, not at all speaking of herself, that those who excelled in intellectual gifts

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or attainments were generally superior in intelligence in every-day matters also. This was a theory of hers which I do not pretend to endorse. At any rate, if it is the rule, there are exceptions, or Sir Isaac Newton, having had a hole in his study door made large enough to admit his full-grown favourite cat, would not have considered it necessary to have a smaller one made to admit the kitten.

In literary as in other matters Jean Ingelow was, through life, very chary of giving a decided opinion; especially was this the case in pronouncing upon the authors of her own time. Where she admired, her praise was often coupled with the expression of her own *reasons* for considering why such and such writers excelled. But when on some very rare occasions she expressed an adverse opinion it went much against the grain. Once in Mr. Mackenzie Bell's presence having made one or two observations upon the younger poets of the day, she so feared he might think himself included in her animadversions that she wrote to explain that she was far from including him, whose poems

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she had always liked and appreciated. But though very reticent in speaking either of current literature or of people, she had her strong partialities as regarded both, and some dislikes.

But Jean was emphatically a lover of peace. To be in her presence gave one a feeling of peace—so little hurry, so little argument, so quiet an understanding of and allowance for other people's proclivities, however much they might differ from her own; such a willingness to listen, to converse, or to be silent, so little occupied with herself, in short, independently of her higher qualities, 'such a pleasant person to live with.'

Those rare and delightful natures, however, who are not mainly occupied with themselves often suffer unduly when people they love are in any trouble; and Jean Ingelow was one of these, for her anxiety and distress when those dearest to her were suffering from any very serious illness or sorrow would sometimes make her ill.

Her determination to avoid the beaten track,

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and to decide for herself occasionally as to what was beautiful and attractive, has already been noticed. Seldom was this determination more apparent than once when she was staying for a few weeks at Broadway, a village in Worcestershire loved alike by poets and artists for its picturesque houses and surrounding scenery. She had started with her friends Mr. and Mrs. John Cunliffe and Miss Murray, who were also staying at Broadway, for a morning ramble, one of her own relatives being of the party, but soon outstripping her companions, whose progress was, I suppose, hampered by the slowness of a donkey upon which Mrs. Cunliffe was mounted, she was after a time discovered seated by the side of the road, apparently in most happy contemplation, but with nothing, as far as her companions could discover, more beautiful to look at than a gate leading into a dull-looking field, a hedge, and a narrow, ditch-like hollow, all the beauty of the landscape as most people count beauty quite shut out. But though joining in the irrepressible laughter with which her friends

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greeted her when they came up, she vouchsafed no explanation of her choice of a resting-place.

Perhaps they interrupted her in the composing of as fine a sonnet as that on a snow mountain, 'Can I make white enough my thoughts for thee?' and by their untimely appearance 'shook all her buds from growing.' Or it may have been that the fluttering of some little bird in the hedge, or the sight of some wayside flower growing on the bank of this unlovely hollow, attracted her to the spot, and enchained her there.

That is a happy nature which can extract and gather to itself little bright fragments of enjoyment from numberless sources such as the generality of people pass by utterly unnoticed. How delightful to find, as she did :

' . . . books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.'

How happy must the life have been that in its leisure time could find the simplest pleasures the most satisfying, and its sweetest working

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hours those that were spent in ministering to and caring for others.

But Jean Ingelow is gone away now 'to the better country, the upper day,' and there are some left behind of those who knew and loved her best, who sometimes find their days in this lower country very sad and lonely without her.

THE END



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